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HEROES &
HEROINES
OF ONITSHA



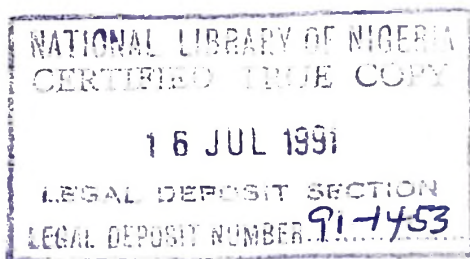
CHIKE AKOSA

EZE CHIMA
FOUNDER
ONICHA ADO N'IDU
(1500 AD)

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HEROES & HEROINES OF ONITSHA



By
CHIKE AKOSA

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ONITSHA**

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DEDICATION

To my Late Parents whose only off spring they
fondly named Louis Chukwunwike

PREFACE

MY inspiration in attempting this work stems from a remark by a family friend of long standing Dr. Nina E. Mba of the Department of History in the University of Lagos. During one of her very infrequent visits to Onitsha, she said, during a conversation, that there was a crying need for documenting Onitsha contemporary history, what with many materials in personalities, activities, documents and events etc. which abound. I could not agree more.

While this work is certainly not my idea of an ideal contemporary history, I thought that an attempt should be made to record the achievements of distinguished men and women from Onitsha who by their special contributions in and outside Onitsha would pave the way for a possible comprehensive contemporary history of Onitsha at a future date.

Although one can hardly exhaust or do justice to the long list of important names that could be included here, it is well nigh impossible for me with my very limited time and resources to do more than I have tried to in this work.

One can only hope that other writers will amplify this modest effort by either continuing where I stopped, to delving into some aspects of our cultural heritage or writing a proper contemporary history of Onitsha.

I guess that the title Heroes and Heroines of Onitsha, may elicit some argument or raise some eyebrows, as to what could be the publisher's criteria for regarding characters mentioned here as heroes and heroines. Surely, not everybody will recognise and accept greatness or heroism in a person through the same lens. For the writer, the yardstick is simple. Any Onitsha man or woman dead or alive who has made valuable contributions in his or her chosen field in or outside Onitsha and thereby brought honour and glory to his

hometown, is for my purpose a hero or heroine.

It is an odd thing for some people to feel or think, that the age of heroes ended in their great or grand parents days. And yet of course, each new generation goes on to produce new heroes, just as each generation did in the past.

What exactly is heroism and who may qualify for it? If you think that a hero is one who became famous because of some great or daring deed, alone, then heroism would seem far-fetched. If however, one believes, as I do, that a lifetime of great accomplishment and devoted service to others, can be as truly heroic as an act of physical bravery, then you find real heroism everywhere in the world today.

Before critics see an honest attempt to document history from a standpoint of a particular environment in which the writer is familiar, as being parochial, it should be borne in mind that writing about Onitsha heroes and heroines is as good as writing about Nigerian or African heroes and heroines albeit, in a limited way. What could or should happen as a result of this effort, is that others with trumpets to blow about characters from their own locality and environment should do likewise thereby making Nigeria as a Nation, better served and honoured by such concerted effort.

It would be presumptuous and utterly immodest if not false of me to pretend or claim that I could accomplish the task of compiling this work alone, without making use of well written articles of the characters listed herein. For this, I am eternally grateful to all the contributors and writers in this work. Their names are associated with their efforts individually. Theleast I can do as a mark of my gratitude, is not only to acknowledge my indebtedness publicly to them all, but to ensure that each and every one of them, receives a free copy of this work as soon as it is published.

It is the fervent hope of the publisher, that this work would in no distant future be a source material for the contemporary history of a town. aptly described by the inimitable Chinua Achebe as "Onitsha, a gift of the lordly Niger, which in its 2,600 mile journey from the Futa Jalon Mountain, through the savannahs, scrubland and tropical forests, finally loses itself in a thousand digressions in the Bight of Biafra. By the time the River Niger gets to Onitsha, it has answered many names, seen a multitude of sights and only in Onitsha it is simply called orumili or plenitude of waters."

If Nigerian readers derive any inspiration from the lives of characters contained in this work then the effort to assemble them shall not be in vain.

Again, the inclusion of Odoziaku Dr. J.M. Stuart-Young, a full blooded European as an Onitshaman is deliberate. It is an attempt to bring home to us the truism in the statement that nwanne di na mba (your true brother may be found in a foreign land). When a person had identified fully with a people among whom he had sojourned, it would be foolish and uncharitable to discriminate against him. Consonant with our custom and tradition, full burial ceremony by Onitsha people for late Odoziaku in 1938, was a manifest acceptance that he was one of the people.

It may be possible that in a future edition, more names which were not readily available or on which sufficient information or no photographs were received may be included.

Finally let me thank my wife Symphorosa and Miss May Epundu for a job well done in typing the manuscript of this

work and all those who have helped in any way to make it possible to publish. To Nnanyelugo Alex Etukokwu a special thanks.

CHIKE AKOSA
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13th August 1987

FOREWORD

THE history of any community may be approached from several standpoints. It would be perfectly legitimate to record or catalogue with appropriate comments if necessary, past events as they may have occurred within the community; or produce a continuous and systematic narrative in order of time, of past events as these relate to the community. On the other hand while one study may deal with economic, social and religious issues another may focus on the lives and times of eminent personalities.

In dealing with the contemporary history of Onitsha the author prefers, on the basis of a random selection, to examine and comment on the activities of some of the personalities who, in his view, contribute to its historical development. The source material for this and similar studies is, in our circumstances, extremely limited. Indeed, much of the data have to be drawn from oral accounts provided by persons with reliable information appertaining to the community and the personalities. Hence with the passage of time and memory being as unreliable as it is, each new chronicler faces mounting difficulties in the course of his research. The random selection and the limited number of persons listed in this work are no doubt, imposed by such difficulties.

While it is true that there are a few books, pamphlets, manuscripts etc. on the subject of Onitsha history, the bulk of these have been the work of non-indigenes. However, very little if any material on the contemporary history of Onitsha is available. Mr Chike Akosa therefore deserves to be congratulated on making a most laudable beginning in the documentation of Onitsha contemporary history. Hopefully, apart from an appreciation of the author's effort, the work should serve as an inducement for other

indigenes, many of whom may possess specialized knowledge and training in the relevant areas, to embark on more detailed and systematic studies.

✓ Onitsha is a community with a rich historical and cultural heritage; but as has already been noted, any study of this history and culture must of necessity be based on oral accounts. There however exist within the community several institutionalized traditional groups through which the study and documentation of the community's history could be tackled. Some of these namely, the IME OBI (the OBI and Ndichie etc, the Agbalanze, Ogbo na Achi Onitsha, the Federation of Age-Grade and Ikporo Onitsha and otu Odu could with some urging initiate, encourage, sponsor and possibly finance such studies. In recent years Onitsha community through a Trust Fund and an IME OBI Building Committee, has embarked upon and constructed an institutional palace for the Obi of Onitsha. One can find no reason why the IME OBI and other groups listed herein should not take on in concert with the rest of the community the suggestions made here.

It is never too late to make a beginning. Even so, time marches on. Are we going to sit back and watch the opportunity to record our history for the benefit of ourselves and posterity pass by? If this work by Mr. Chike Akosa awakens in the people of Onitsha a realization of the myriad opportunity that have been lost and leads sooner than later, to the entire community taking up the essential task of documenting the various facets of its history and tradition, then his effort will not have been in vain.

JOHN OKEY. IBEZIAKO

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EZE CHIMA



EZE CHIMA

The sojourn of Onitsha people in Obior no doubt marked a turning point in their history. Although Chima was never crowned a king of his people, he was doubtless held in high esteem as a great political personality, a wise man and an able ruler. It is in this light that Chima was regarded as the first Obi of Onitsha. However, he soon settled down with his people and wasted no time in making them to resume their vocational career for which they were famous-metal work, bronze-casting, weaving, art work, handicraft, agriculture and trading.

Those engaged in farming moved to new holdings miles away from the town only to pay occasional visits to their relations or to participate in the Ofala festival. This farm settlement was later called Onitsha Ugbo, meaning Onitsha farm settlers. Today, the settlement has blossomed into an urban town in Asaba Division.

As years rolled by one of the leading henchmen of Eze Chima called Olona left Obior with his family and some of his kinsmen and founded a new home now called Onitsha-Olona. What prompted him to take the inevitable decision was the growing whisper in high quarters about possible migration further-down to the Niger. He was very old and therefore considered his feeble frame incapable of undertaking a long and arduous journey fraught with adventure and uncertainties.

Other segments of the immigrants, especially those engaged in trade travelled far afield and founded new settlements, such as Issele-Uku, Obamkpa, Ewulu Onitsha-Ukwu etc. Others went down to the River Niger and traded with the people of Igala and Idah. They maintained trading depots in places like Illah, Ebu, Ilushi, Odo, Igbokenyi, Nzam and Anam. Among their wares were guns,

gunpowder, choral beads, potash, cotton fabric, agricultural implements etc.

During this time one of the sons of Chima called Daike went and settled at Illah with his family. He was a greatman, wise and wealthy. He was popular and highly respected. The story was told of how sometime a land dispute arose between two sections of the community in Illah. For several years the matter dragged along without any hope of peaceful settlement. After many clashes which involved loss of human lives, Daike intervened and to the amazement of the people of the town, amicably settled the matter. The people were very grateful to him. This singular achievement, no doubt, increased his popularity. When the king of the town died after some years, and as a mark of appreciation for the peace he brought to the town, Daike was unanimously offered the kingship. He refused in spite of persuasions.

Many years after, the Iyasere of Illah did and again Daike was offered the opportunity of taking the title. He refused. On this occasion the people were not pleased with him. They alleged that he did not like their town. But in order to prove the allegation wrong he acceded to their request to the jubilation of all and sundry. The title of Iyasere (Prime Minister) of Illah has become a hereditary legacy of the descendents of Daike. Another son of Chima from which, over the years, sprouted the towns of Issele-Azagba and Issele-Mkpitima.

Before long, Onitsha traders had made many friends in places of their commercial activities. The fame of Eze-Chima had travelled far and wide and therefore won for him many friends among people in that part of the world. One day he was visited by a noble Igala man called Ogbodogo with a large retinue. He brought him greetings and gifts from the king of Igala. In the entourage was another nobleman named Okonmanya. During the course of conversation they told Chima about a beautiful, fertile and uninhabited land on the

eastern bank of the River Niger which was occasionally used as fishing ports by itinerant fishermen from Igala.

This story very much impressed Chima and made him to think aloud about plans for his people to resume their migration across the Niger to the new found land. For this reason Chima summoned his followers among whom were some of his children — Ukpali, Oreze, Chimevi, Dei, Ogwuezi, Oligbo Daike — and narrated the story to them.

Their hearts were gladdened as they felt that possession of such an uninhabited land would afford their people better scope of peaceful life and development of their farms and trade. They agreed to send Oreze, the second son, to scout the land with the help of Ogbodogo and Okomanya who promised to take him in their canoe across the Niger. Shortly after, the journey was successfully undertaken. On their return Oreze narrated all he saw to his father. He described the land as very beautiful and fertile for dwelling and farming. He found the itinerant Igala fishermen on the beach very friendly and willing to help him survey the land.

Chima was grateful to Ogbodogo and Okonmanya. He immediately called his council of state and told them what happened. They were pleased and were ready to move to the new land anytime. Meanwhile, all arrangements were put in hand as to how and when the crossing would be made. Both Ogbodogo and Okomanya were prepared to provide fleets of canoes to ferry the emigrants. But what a misfortune? When all preparations were in full swing, Eze Chima took ill and died! He was really old. Thus ended the first phase of an episode which later opened a vista of historical events that eventually led to the founding of Onitsha Mmili-a land destined to be one of the most progressive towns in Nigeria.

After many months of funeral obsequies, the remains of Eze Chima were buried at Ogbe Utu in Obior. Later, an

anthill grew on his grave otherwise called IBA, and has now become a shrine much revered by his descendants. Modern Obior has erected a building over the grave. In the building are to be found clay moulding of Chima his wife, Ezechi: then Oligbo, Obamkpa and a bevy of courtiers.

The dominant influence of Chima over his own people and beyond the periphery of their domain made the people of Obior to choose Ukpali, after the death of his father, to become their ruler. Thus, Ukpali became the first Obi of Obior.

Crossing the River Niger:

Consequent upon the death of Eze Chima, the proposed crossing of the River Niger was postponed for a long time in order to perform the funeral obsequies of the late ruler as required by tradition. Subsequently, Oreze was chosen to lead the crossing in place of Ukpali. He proved to be a dynamic and forward-looking man. He held his followers firmly together and actively kept them alive to their father's dream of a promised land across the Niger. At the end of the mourning period which took several months, the Council of Elders decided that a new Obi of Onitsha be installed before the mooted journey would be undertaken. The Kingmakers therefore, nominated Oreze, but surprisingly two other sons of Eze Chima, Dei and Ogwueze objected to the nomination and therefore presented themselves as rival candidates, claiming that as princes, they equally were entitled to the obishop.

Following the wake of this opposition, a bitter controversy ensued to the point of disrupting plans already made and concluded for the proposed journey. In order to arrest the danger that loomed ahead to the detriment of the people's solidarity, the elders intervened. They wisely enjoined that the mooted installation should be suspended

until the arrival of the emigrants at their destination across the Niger. Prince Oreze, however, remained the leader and in the circumstance, continued with the arrangements for the migration, even though some years have elapsed.

When the time came and Oreze appealed to his followers to bestir themselves for the journey across the Niger, Olona indicated his inability to rejoin the exodus owing to old age and infirmity. Daike said that he had become the Iyasele of Illah and therefore would not abdicate his new office for the journey. The other members of the original entourage who had founded permanent homes in Agbor, Isele-Uku, Onitsha-Ugbo, etc., preferred to live permanently in their respective locations. However, parts of the people of the towns of Obior, Obamkpa, Umulu and the villages of Ogboli and Issele Azagba opted to join the exodus and therefore became integrated in the Umueze kindred group. Ezi, daughter of Eze Chima, whose child-birth was imminent was left behind in care of a farm settlement with her husband to rejoin the exodus later. But after delivery she stayed on and, as the story goes, the settlement was afterwards known as Ezi after her name.

However, in order to allow sleeping dogs lie regarding the suspended Obishop tangle, the Council of Elders decreed that on arrival of the emigrants at the eastern bank of the River Niger any of the contending princes for the throne who goes to the forest with his party and be the first to cut down a tree, carve out an ufie gong and play it in the town will be proclaimed the ruler. Everybody agreed to the decision.

Then came the eventful day! The people, in answer to the clarion call of Oreze, had assembled for the epoch-making journey to the Niger. They took with them the remaining regalia and the preserved hairs of their deceased king and bade farewell to their kith and kin to be left behind, the Obis of Agbor, Issele-Uku, Ogwashi Uku, Obior and to Daike,

the Iyasere of Illah. Prince Oreze then led his people from Obior to Uto River where Ogbodogo and Okomanya, with the aid of their Igala compatriots, had assembled hundreds of canoes which they boarded — men, women, children and the aged. From this river they sailed to Illah and then entered the River Niger. It was a bright day as forecast by the oracle. The river was placid. The crossing of the great river was smooth. They sometimes realised occasional strains of their ancient days!

(Culled from Groundwork of Onitsha History and Culture by S.I. Bosah)



H.R.H. ANAZONWU I

A BIOGRAPHY OF OBI ANAZONWU

1874 — 1899

This work does not lay claim to foolproof validity for a number of reasons. First, it is written about a century after the life and times of the man of whom it is all about. Second and perhaps by virtue of the first, the writer is without the good fortune of direct personal knowledge of the subject. Third, very scanty authoritative information is available both from oral and written sources about those little details of a mans life which only make a biography.

What has been done is an eclectic compilation of relevant available information and an occasional attempt, using the few known facts of his life, to reconstruct as logically as is presently possible, the life of a very notable historical figure in Onitsha as well as the philosophies and inner workings of his mind.

Obi Anazonwu was the 16th ruler in the line of Onitsha sovereigns from Eze Chima, the first ruler of the town and to who is ascribed the leadership of the ancestral migratory band from the kingdom of Bini (Benin) west of the River Niger. He was born in about the year 1823 into the Onitsha royal family, his father being Obi Akazue, the 14th ruler of Onitsha. His mother was Odeigai who came from Ogbodogwu village also in Onitsha².

The third surviving male child of a large polygamous family (others before him being Odili and Diali) and the first by his own mother (others being Agbakoba and Odigbo), Anazonwu ascended the throne in 1874 following the death of Diali, his elder brother, during the protracted ceremonies of his installation in that year. Odili, the eldest male offspring of their father had died in their father's lifetime.

Practically nothing is known of his life in the years before his assumption of office as king of Onitsha. However, unlike many before and after him, the circumstances surrounding his installation were remarkably peaceful.

Obi Anozonwu's reign coincided with the high-tide of European (especially British) commercial and missionary activities on the lower Niger area and the drive to gain a foothold on the eastern hinterland. This was the period of the so-called "Scramble for Africa". In the actualization of these European objectives, Onitsha was to be a launching - pad for the civilization and evangelization of the eastern parts of Igboland and entrenchment of European economic and related interests in the area³. It was therefore as the Sovereign of a town considered the gateway to the Igbo heartland and against the background of intense external pressure for change, that many of the historically notable events of his reign were acted out.

His conduct of the relationship between Onitsha and the diverse European interests of the time was marked by a good measure of fluidity. Apart from the fact that he was clearly well disposed towards them, this fact is perhaps also partly explained by his **fairly good**

grounding in the workings of European diplomacy. It will be recalled that the Europeans had established regular contacts with Onitsha much earlier in 1857 during the reign of his father, Obi Akazue.

One of the earliest significant events of his reign was the entry into a treaty with Queen Victoria of Great Britain in October 15, 1877 for the "abolition of Human Sacrifices, and the propagation of Christian Religion" in Onitsha Kingdom. It should be noted that at that point in time, the country, Nigeria, had not been founded and the Queen Victoria had to deal with her counterparts in other parts of the world including Onitsha Kingdom. For Onitsha, the treaty principally entailed the renunciation of human sacrifices, the guarantee of a favourable religious climate under which the missionaries could operate and the cession of some lands along the Niger to the merchant companies and missionaries then operating there.

By 1879, the four principal trading companies of the lower Niger had amalgamated to form the United African Company under George Goldie. Thenceforth, and in accordance with their objectives of amalgamation, this company began to press for concessional trading rights, rival firms from doing business in Onitsha. These monopolistic tendencies placed undue restrictions on the pristine trade liberties of Onitsha. To Obi Anazonwu and his chiefs, this was most unacceptable. Accordingly such claims were disregarded⁴ and a rival Liverpool firm was granted the right to trade in Onitsha. The action of the new conglomerate company was prompt: its wharf in

Onitsha was closed down and the town blockaded. A spate of riots followed in which European factories were looted by irate Onitsha people protesting against the company's gun-boat, the HMS Pioneer, stationed on the Niger, bombarded the town. This was on November 2, 1879. The British had once again won by force what could not be achieved by reason.

The company then proceeded to the king and chiefs of Onitsha into signing a "treaty" on August 20, 1884, ceding "the whole of their territory to the National African Company (its new name) forever". This was however under the condition that they, the company, would not interfere with the land native laws and customs of the people. Another treaty signed at the instance of Mr. E.H. Hewett, British consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra, and dated October 9, 1884, claimed to extend to Onitsha "the gracious favour and protection" of the British sovereign.

Though highly compromising in some of their wordings, these treaties had practically no effect on the exercise of traditional authority by the Obi and Council. The British Political agents and company officials were only interested in "excluding foreign settlers" notably the French and other rival nationals from the area in a preliminary move towards the declaration of a protectorate.

Though not a christian himself, Obi Anazonwu's dealings with christian missionaries, especially the Roman Catholic mission were very cordial. In 1885, the RCM made its debut in Onitsha under the French Holy Ghost fathers. On Saturday, December 5th of that year, Rev. Fathers Lutz and Horne, one half of the missionary party that set out from Paris, arrived Onitsha.

Accompanied by one Mr. Townsend, Rev. Father Lutz made straight to see the King and seek his permission to settle in the town. He was well received and got a promise of any land "of his own choosing"⁵

Early in January the next year (1886) the missionaries met the King and the chiefs in his palace and discussed the problem of acquiring a piece of land. Father Lutz's entry into the journal of the Holy Ghost Fathers records the encounter thus:... His majesty (Obi Anazonwu) appeared before us wearing a beautiful gold crown on his head, he shook hands with us in most cordial welcome and made us sit down by his side.

... All the chiefs were convoked. The King's brother, the King's eldest son, the first class and second class chiefs and many notables of the place were assembled.

... Now seated in the assembly, we related the object of our visit: it was to get permission to set up a mission. The King showed himself very well disposed towards us and our request to be allowed to settle in his domain. He assured us that he would as far as it lay in his power, satisfy our needs and soon gave two of his children to us to be trained. As regards our volunteered help, they could not get over their astonishment and admiration of the fact that we have come from a distant country of the whites, not to trade and make money like the generality of the whites living in the place, but simply to do good, to instruct and inform their children"⁶

Obi Anazonwu made good his promise of a piece of land which the R.C.M. fathers later exchanged with another one previously given to the C.M.S. with the help of the King. The land was given to them "in perpetuity, free of all tribute and dues".

On their part, the Holy Ghost Fathers undertook to provide formal education for the children of the community with the consent of their parents and or guardians. They were to be taught the catholic doctrine as well as English, Arithmetic, Reading and writing. As has been noted earlier, the king volunteered two of his own children for this experiment.

Commenting on what must have been the real motive(s) behind these lavish gestures of hospitality on the part of Obi Anazonwu, Rev. Fr. C.A. Obi in the work **A hundred years of the Catholic church in Eastern Nigeria 1885 - 1985**, wrote:

The trading companies and missions brought with them certain blessings and advantages which Onitsha people could not afford to be without. The king, Obi Anazonwu welcomed missionaries and traders in order to gain something in the deal.⁷

Continuing, he quoted Bishop S.A. Crowther and Taylor as saying that.

"Onitsha in 1857, was in a poor state, surrounded by enemies and welcomed trade and missions in the hope of increased prosperity, and assured arms supply and an escape from the dangerous diplomatic isolation." He concluded that

...The agnostic or atheist may accept these explanations as the reason why the king permitted the Catholic missionaries to settle in his territory. The man of faith however would see Divine

intervention in the whole drama.⁸

Whatever may have been the true combination of actors that explain it, what cannot be denied is that Obi Anazonwu was clearly a practical man who saw diverse social, economic and political gains to be derived from the contact with the Europeans and did not hesitate to grab it for himself and his domain. He saw the times for what they were and tried to make the best of the situation. He had the foresight befitting his exalted office; neither attempting to halt the wind of change, nor push the hands of progress too fast. His policy in this regard would appear to have been one of selective accommodation. For while the accounts of his dealings with the Europeans reveal his appreciation of the need for modernization, they likewise show a firm resolve not to compromise his interests and those of his people,

whenever that was possible. For instance, early in 1886 (shortly after the negotiation of the land gift with the RCM) when Brother Jean Gotto died and was buried in the missionary compound, Obi Anazonwu "wrote" Fr. Lutz a letter strongly expressing his displeasure at the act (of burial), reminding him that it was prohibited by local laws and customs to bury a stranger in Onitsha town, and warning that local burial rules must be strictly observed. He wondered how the soul of the dead stranger would reach its final resting place if the stranger was buried in a foreign land. In the words of Rev. C.A. Obi, these actions were evidence of "the king's exercise of royal power, that his word was law and all the inhabitants of Onitsha - white and black alike - were all his subjects."⁹

Even in his warm-hearted welcome of the missionaries, he also exhibited that shrewdness and tact most common with diplomats of note throughout history. Not quite certain of what might be the effects of

this new influence, Obi Anazonwu deliberately refrained from offering his first two sons for the benefit of missionary education. Thus although a good number of his children were to become literate, Obiozo and Ebezue, his first and second sons, never attended school.¹⁰ Much was expected of them by tradition and these could not be risked in what then still amounted to an experiment.

For his many dealings with the Europeans, he was fondly called "Obi Akwukwo" by his subjects. Translated into English, this would mean "the learned king".

The same political agility most apparent in his dealings with the European interest groups was equally present in his domestic policies. In 1894, a major political crisis erupted between Obi Anazonwu and Obiogbolu (Alias Ezeoba) who was then the Ogene (a member of the highest council of chiefs) and a very influential figure in the town. The very details of this conflict are not clear. It is however known that two years earlier, Obiogbolu had in defiance of the king taken title of Ezeoba literally meaning "king of kings"¹² What appears a deep-seated personality conflict developed between the two men which climaxed in the arrest of Obiogbolu on May 14 1894 by agents of the Royal Niger Company acting on the instructions of Obi Anazonwu. Obiogbolu was remanded in custody in Asaba across the Niger where he eventually died.

FAMILY LIFE

In line with the marital practices of his time, Obi Anazonwu married several wives numbering six in all: Okwuego, Anokwu, Uduefi, Memnofu, Muofunanya and Nmamme.

But for Okwuego (from Ogboli Olosi), Anokwu and Nmamme (both from Ogboli Eke) who were from

Onitsha, his other three wives were from neighbouring towns. Uduefi was from Nkpo, Memnofu from Obosi and Muofunanya from Nsugbe.

By his six wives, he had eight sons; Obiozo, Ebezue, Agulefo Agutonu, Edekobi, Chuke, Udemba and Onyejiaka as well as a host of female offsprings some of whom were Mukaolu, Batokwu, Nneka and Ekwunife.

The spread of his marital affiliations among neighbouring communities was most probably motivated by political ends, namely the need for diplomatic solidarity based on marital alliances which then counted for much.

Local traditions as well as the many European accounts on the lower Niger acknowledge the existence of political tension and the occasional outbreak of hostilities between Onitsha and several of her surrounding communities. This was common in the middle of the nineteenth century.

These marriages were therefore obviously made to cool tempers reduce hostilities, ensure Onitsha's maintenance of her strategic location of the Niger and avoid the dangerous diplomatic isolation. These objectives would appear to have been achieved for there were no recorded hostilities with such communities during his reign.

Obi Anazonwu died in 1899. He was the last in an unbroken line of nine successive Onitsha sovereigns directly descending from the founder of Onitsha, Obi Eze Aroli (Umuezearli) and spanning over a century. His reign remains one of the most peaceful and progressive in Onitsha regnal history.

NOTES

1. See Onitsha regnal list
2. D.U. Anazonwu, 52, grandson of Obi Anazonwu, Civil Servant, Enugu, interviewed 20th August, 1986.
3. See reports of European traders, missionaries and political officers from the 1857 expedition onwards on the choice of Onitsha for establishment of stations.
4. Nzimiro, *Studies in Igbo political systems*. (Berkely, University of California press, 1972), p. 9.
5. C.S.E. Community journal (November 21 to December 5, 1885) quoted in C.A. Obi (ed.), *A Hundred years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigerian 1885 — 1985* (Onitsha, 1 Africana FEP Publishers, 1985), p 15.
6. Ibid., P. 17
7. C.A. Obi, OP Cit, Pp 19—20
8. Ibid
9. Ibid., Pp 31 — 32
10. D.U. Anazonwu, interview cited.
11. D.U. Anazonwu, interview cited.
12. S.I. Bosa, *Groundwork of the History and Culture of Onitsha*, (Onitsha, Bosah, 1978).

BY

VICTOR OSITA ANAZONWU
B.A. (HONS) HISTORY U.N.N.



OMU NWAGBOKA

OMU NWAGBOKA: QUEEN OF ONITSHA

IN a society like ours where women have allowed themselves to play a subsidiary role to men and often times are treated like chattels until formal education became the birthright of Nigerian citizens, it is interesting to know that in the last century at Onitsha there was a woman, who held her own as of right and was no man's inferior. That woman was no other than Omu (Queen) Nwagboka the only known Queen (not King's wife) recorded in Onitsha history.

Although King Anazonwu I ruled Onitsha at the time the Omu reigned over women affairs, Omu Nwagboka was very wealthy and influential. She was present and involved whenever Obi anazonwu I had important dignitaries like European merchants in his court. On 9th October, 1884, when Her Majesty Victoria the Queen of the United Kingdom, of Great Britain and Ireland Empress of India concluded a treaty of friendship with King Anazonwu I, Omu Nwagboka with a few Red Cap Chiefs was present. Representing the Queen of England was E.H. Hewett Esq. the Consul for Bights of Benin and Biafra. Part of the terms of the treaty was that "the kings and chiefs of Onitsha hereby engage to assist the British Consul or other officers in the execution of such duties as may be assigned to them; and further, to act upon their advice in matters relating to the administration of justice, the development of the resources of the country, the interests of commerce or in any other matter in relation to peace, order and good government and the general progress of civilization.

Omu Nwagboka was at the head of Onitsha women's organisation known as the otu ogene. Although this title is that of one of the senior male red cap chiefs, this chief had no special relationship to this group under the Omu. The group could well be regarded as the "Queen's

Council." It in turn is a part of the larger organisation called "women of Onitsha" (Ikporo Onicha), to which all women who are or have been married belong. The Omu presides over this organisation, since her role closely parallels that of the king of Onitsha. She is not the king's wife but a person who is genealogically distant from the king. Her "councillors" (ndi otu ogene) are women with title names in some cases identical to those of Onitsha chiefs.

According to Richard Henderson in his *Evolutionary Trends in Onitsha Ibo Society and Culture* "Onitsha women, particularly, those who became the queen and her councillors are regarded as the "prophets" (ndi amuma) of the community, for they often dream of spirits who come to them warning, of imminent dangers and demanding sacrifices. These women take charge of "sacrifices driving evil from the town " ichu aja obodo ; seasonally for example they take burning firebrands from their hearths, wave them about their households and compounds and carry the fiery heat of accumulated abominations outwards through the medicinal arches, protecting the town. On the side towards the eastern hinterlands, they cast the firebrands out on the "Ibo road" (uzo igbo), and on the side toward the river they carry them down past the great market and throw them into the river, which "quenches the fires." Such acts are directed by the queen in consultation with the king.

"The women's organisation is basically an organisation of patrilineage and clan daughters. The queen should be head daughters of her segment of the royal clan, and her titled councillors should be head daughters of their clan or village units. Thus they are tied to the ascriptive base of descent group membership.

The queen is handed her ofo omu by the king of Onitsha and the titled councillors receive their own head daughter's ofo from their own senior priests and hidden

kings - eze idi. However in order to participate actively in this council, women must first "put on ivories" (igbu odu), by obtaining and arranging to wear ivory bracelets and anklets as visible signs of their purification. This means that they, must mobilize wealth to redistribute among preciously purified persons.

"The bodies of the queen and her councillors become holy as do those of purified men, in that anyone who abuses one of them physically must pay a fine and perform ceremonies to undo the forbidden act. The queen must always wear white cloth; she holds a ceremonial sword (mma abani) like that of the king, carries the leather fan (azuzu) for making peace, and maintains her own special set of women's war drums (izabu). She has her own palace (constructed ordinarily at her marital home), performs her own annual ceremony of emergence (ofala) some days after that of the king, and emulates his activities in a number of other ways. She also possesses a market throne (ukpo) a decorated market stool carried for her by her own slaves. Her councillors also wear white cloth and have slaves to carry their market stools to the great Nkwo market.

"The queen and her councillors directly, control the activities of the great market. Trade cannot begin before they have arrived and occupied their stalls. In public women's meetings at the lowland square they regulate what products may be sold in the market, by whom and at what price. they oversee orderly trading and may handle market violations in their court. They may judge disputes, require suspended offenders to take an oath on the women's medicine, levy fines and report to the king any violations or problems that they cannot handle themselves. They receive regular tribute in kind from all trading women in the market."

Omu Nwagboka who died in 1890, was born by a woman named Ngbokwa Amasinwa Okigbo from Ojoto.

Amasinwa was married to Isagba Okwuona the son of Bachi of Ogbendida Village in Onitsha. Their marriage was blessed with the following sons and daughters:— Achutebe, Chukwurah, Okolonji, Mkpulumma, Ebosie, Akonokwu and Nwagboka.

Akonaokwu was married to Agbu the father of Akunnia Njote Agbu of Umuasele Village, while Nwagboka was married to Oba Uzoka of Ogbotu village an immigrant from Igala who had settled by the bank of the River Niger, before the arrival of some Onitsha immigrants from Benin. Oba Uzoka was the son of Afoka Ogbodogu of Igala.

He lived with his wife Nwagboka at the lower Niger. He had another wife Agaebi Ifedi of Odojele Ndugbele. The latter bore him Egbuche.

Nwagboka had her only son at an old age and had to name him "Egwu na tum (Egwuatu) Nwagboka" after the fashion of the old days in Onitsha when children were named after their mother especially if the mother was affluent. Egwu na tum in Ibo means "I am afraid." She was afraid for herself and for the child who came to her at an advanced age.

Uzoka kept two homes one at Onitsha and the other at Igala. He became a member of the Attah of Igala with the title Oguje of Obela and helped the Attah of Igalla in council matters. Oguje Uzoka kept in touch with his children and grandchildren at Onitsha before he later died.

Meanwhile his wife Nwagboka was a very influential organiser, patriotic and dynamic woman and had considerable influence among the women folk of Onitsha. She was neither literate nor a converted Christian. Yet her influence extended beyond Onitsha to

England whence the early white traders to the West Coast came. She sold elephant tusks from Igala to early European traders at Otu Obosi. It was said that by shipping two consignments of elephant tusks she made a fabulous amount of £10,000.00. This amount was shared between her and her family and Obi Anazonwu I. The Obi of Onitsha made Nwagboka the Omu or Queen in 1884.

It was said that the late Queen Victoria found much favour with Omu Nwagboka and sent her many presents and advised her on how to organise the women folk of Onitsha whose mouthpiece she was.

When her only son Egwuatu was of age her mother married for her as many as eleven wives. Because there had not been ozo title in Ogbotu, Omu Nwagboka brought the ozo title from her village of Ogbendida in Umuezeoroli for her son Egwuatu thereby making history that Egwuatu the son of Nwagboka was the first person in Ogbotu to take the Onitsha ozo title.

Her son Egwuatu begat the following among others, Obiora Egwuatu father of Bright Egwuatu of Omekokwu Age Grade Society, Francis Egwuatu, Joseph Egwuatu, Julius Egwuatu late Ogene Onira of Onitsha, Albert Egwuatu and J.K. Egwuatu father of Benneth and Engr. Gordian Egwuatu.



REV. G.N. ANYAEGBUNAM

REV. GEORGE NICHOLAS ANYAEGBUNAM

HE was born about 1837 in the famous Umuda family of Okwueinye kindred in Umuasele Village, Onitsha Town. He was the son of Mr. Anyaegbunam and grandson of Chief Anyaegbunam Melie, the Osuma of Onitsha. His mother was the daughter of Mr. Ndebe of Odoje Village, Onitsha, and his senior sister was Madam Leah Amangbo Onyeabo, the mother of Bishop Alphonso Chukwuma Onyeabo.

He was a God-sent-man which he exhibited despite all odds facing his schooling and deep seated association with the early missionaries, yet by God's guidance and protection he coped with the situation.

He persevered and encouraged his mates and comrades to focus their attention on the good news and teachings of the missionaries. The missionaries set up a mushroom school in the compound of Chief Okagbue, the Agba of Onitsha, to avoid molestation and confrontation by the brutal enemies of the time. To describe the wild confrontation they encountered while attending school could better be real imagined than exposure.

Despite odds and the onerous task ahead, he voluntarily surrendered himself to the missionaries, demonstrating his desire to answer God's call as shown in the scriptures Isaiah chapter six verse eight - "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I: send me".

The missionaries tested and found in him the qualities of an evangelist and employed him as an interpreter and later a church worker. Through the instrumentality and influence of Catechist George N. Anyaegbunam, the

missionaries had easy access in seeing the Obi Onitsha, Igwe Akazua and his handful of cabin members and also meeting Onitsha people. Even though the task was unbearable but as an indigenous son he devised appropriate methods of approach to win them hence communication was made easy.

The missionaries began to mix with the people and the preaching of the Gospel got firm footing, thereby winning their souls and converting them. He worked with Bishop Samuel Ajai Crowther, Rev. Taylor and host of others. He followed Bishop Crowther to Lokoja in the expedition of Clapperton and his brother.

He witnessed the establishment and commissioning of the Government Constabulary at Asaba.

He worked with the second batch of missionaries in 1862 among whom was Rev. Jackson. During their mission, the people of Onitsha had favour with the Rev. Jackson because of his handsomeness, well-behaved and unassuming attitude. No sooner, he mixed with them, they nicknamed him "Ogbotalunozo". This alias authorised him to attend the meetings of Ozo Society, a Society of no mean calibre.

During his mission he came across where Onitsha people were worshipping at one of the shrines, offering various kinds of animals to the idols including human beings for sacrifice. He openly condemned their mode of worship and the offering of human beings for sacrifice. The people reacted adversely, ostracised him and condemned his mission outright.

In 1868 another batch was led by the Rev. Dobinson Catechist G.N. Anyaegbunam was among those who welcomed them. The Rev. Dobinson was tender, handsome, elegant and humble. They admired his physiognomy and it earned him a popular nickname "EKILIBE EJEOLU". He was with the Europeans

missionary who witnessed physically the IKPU ALU ceremony. On this occasion, the obnoxious way of handling a human prey, male or female was an eye sore. The human prey had to be tied hands and feet and dragged along the ground from the eastern end of the inland town to the waterside and finally thrown alive or dead into the river niger. This ceremony affected more of virgin girls. Rev. Dobinson was outraged and unreservedly shouted on the people, condemning the in-human act.

The whole town took offence. They decided either to drive away or kill the missionaries. Mr. Simon Jonas Mbanugo, Mr. Abraham Obianwu and Catechist G.N. Anyaegbunam intervened, pleading for leniency but their efforts proved abortive.

Onitsha people prepared for war. They carried cudgels, matchets, native guns and other available weapons and marched along Ojedi Road towards the Old Compound where the missionaries lived. As the missionaries were trembling and shivering as there was no way of escape, the church teacher, Mr. Simon Jonas Mbanugo, the father of the Rev. simeon Chukwunweike Mbanugo, encouraged them by asking for collective prayer.

They gathered together and had fervent faithful prayer. It worked out instantaneous miracle. An unexpected downpour of very heavy rainfall scattered them and there was quaint calm. The result of the incident was the exodus of the missionaries to Asaba in company of the Catechist G.N. anyaegbunam.

The secretary to the Church Missionary Society, London invited Bishop Hills from Australia to settle the dispute. He arrived Onitsha in 1872. With the help of the Church teacher Mr. Simon Jonas Mbanugo and Mr. Abraham Obianwu who remained at Onitsha, the people

of Onitsha were convinced and Catechist G.N. Anyaegbunam pleaded with the European missionaries at Asaba. The two parties met and peace returned to Onitsha. In 1884, the missionaries and the Catechists returned to Onitsha. During this period of separation Mr. Simon Jonas Mbanugo and Mr. Abraham Obianwa continued gathering christians and making new converts, resulting to having many christians who converged to welcome them from Asaba, Bishop S.A. Crowther posted Mr. G.N. Anyaegbunam to the church in the Inland town known today as Immanuel Church, Onitsha. He erected a wattled mud building for prayers and evangelism.

In a meeting convened by Bishop S.A. Crowther in which Mr. G.N. Anyaegbunam was present together with other missionaries, the Bishop was advised to consult the Secretary to the Church Missionary Society, England, for the recruitment of West Indian missionaries of America to assist in the dissemination of the Gospel and for the educational enlightenment and emancipation of the people of Iboland.

This request was well taken and the first batch of recruitment comprised of the following personalities namely Rev. Spencer, Mr. and Mrs. Blackett, Mr. Llywlyn, Mr. Mackay and others. It is gratifying to note that these West Indians introduced cassava (locally called Omela-ebele bia n'uwa) or Akpu, yams (which replaced adu) mango, cashew and guava. These food items sustained lives abundantly up till date.

Mr. G.N. Anyaegbunam piloted the West Indians until European antagonism subsided.

The new set-up of missionaries was headed by the Rev. G.T. Basden (alias Mbazu). They had the policy of expanding education and training promising christian members. With the recommendation of the Rev. G.N. Anyaegbunam, the following persons were sent to C.M.S. College, Oyo, namely Mr. Gbasouzo Okosi (later became, Chief Gbasouzo, the Onowu of Onitsha) for music, Mr. Isaac Mba (the Owelle of Onitsha) for Education and Mr. Ephraim Omekokwulu Agha who graduated at the Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone in General Education, who later decamped to Roman Catholic Church Onitsha and composed the Catechism still in use among them.

Rev. G.N. Anyaegbunam helped the Rt. Rev. S.A. Crowther to translate St. Mark's Gospel into Onitsha language. Later on, he persuaded the then authorities that the translation of the whole English Bible should be given priority in their programme of projects. His suggestion was supported unanimously. The following personalities voluntarily offered themselves namely Archdeacon T.J. Dennis in whose memory the Dennis Memoria Grammar School was built and Mr. G. Anyaegbunam, an Onitsha educationist. For better concentration they shifted their base to Egbu in Owerri.

After the ordination of the Rev. G.N. Anyaegbunam at Lokoja, he returned and remained at the compound, but was responsible for the skeleton churches in Onitsha town.

When he had gained experience and the Rev. A.C. Onyeabo became a priest, he was posted to Asaba as a pioneer Priest. He based his Headquarter at Asaba quasi-township. He is married to Mrs. Philippa Anyaegbunam (nee Obianwu) who had three daughters Mrs. Priscilla Maduegbuna, Miss Pheobe Anyaegbunam and Miss Mercy Anyaegbunam. He evangelised most places in Asaba. He travelled on foot to Ibusa,

Ugwashiukwu, Ubulukwu, Okpanam, Isele-Ukwu to mention a few. As he went, he established churches and schools simultaneously. He was replaced with the Rev. Hezekiah N. Nweje and was transferred to Ogidi as the first Pastor for the area.

He was based at St. Philip's Church, Ogidi. He used to cover the following places, Ogbunike, Nteje, Awkuzu, Ukpo, Umunya, Abatete, Umuoji, Nnobi etc. He established Central Schools at Ogidi, Awkuzu, Nnobi and Abatete to be within reach of the neighbouring towns. Smaller schools sprang up in the other towns as feeders. His first wife helped him to outreach women evangelisation and projecting the image C.M.S. Iyi-Enu Hospital, Onitsha and St. Monica's School, Ogbunike. She established women meetings and conferences where women received education on domestic affairs and christian principles and doctrine.

He was transferred to Christ Church, Onitsha. Here he lost his wife by death and had to marry another wife, Miss Elizabeth Nsenu, a daughter of Mr. Benjamin Emenike Nsenu, a Catechist. She had five daughters and one son by name Mr. Ben George Anyaegbunam, an Inspector of Police.

While at Christ Church, Onitsha he focussed more of his attention on establishing strong foundation in the spiritual life of Onitsha people, his own people. He demolished the Immanuel Church building and widened it, giving it a better look. The seats were made of mud dual seats instead of the bamboo seats used by the Rev. M.C. Ogo. He also roofed it with corrugated iron sheets, a new look which attracted many men and women to the church. He posted his first cousin catechist Timothy Ibegbu. He placed order for a large bell which was installed and used instead of gong. It was during the time Mr. Timothy Ibegbu was the Station

Agent/Catechist that the bell was stolen and later discovered at Okija. Before the recovery, it had been replaced with another one. The stolen bell was given to St. Stephen's Church, Onitsha and is now still in use.

It was during his time that the former site of St. Stephen's Church, Onitsha was abandoned along Omozele Road southern end/Aroli Street (now occupied by Emejulu family of Umuezeoroli, Ogbeobi quarters, Onitsha) and shifted to Okosi Roald, opposite old Ime Obi, Onitsha. Mr. Joseph Onyeisi Chukwuemeka Onyejekwe, the writer, was the bell ringer while living with the Rev. A.C. Onyeabo.

He posted Mr. Ekwue of Nnobi, a Catechist, to man the new site building. The new church was built by carpenters Nathaniel Ikemefuna Ifeka and a member, Mr. Jacob Chukwura while the roof of the church was being constructed, a slip rafter rolled down from top but for the mercy of God, the workers and the on-lookers safely escaped being hurt miraculously and the air filled with the song "God works in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform". The Church was dedicated and the congregation multiplied enormously through his spiritual encouragement and food.

He master-minded the training of his first cousin the Rt. Rev. A.C. Onyeabo whom he handed over to the Rev. Spencer, a West Indian, the Principal of C.M.S. College Obosi. Here the future Bishop was nurtured and enriched with spiritual inspiration and to see things in proper perspective, preparatory to the life long vocation of priesthood. Rev. G.N. Anyaegbunam was the God-father of the Bishop and his youthful training and schooling was from his (Anyaegbunam's) house.

In the same vein he converted and brought up the Rev. H.O. Nweje.

The Rev. G.N. Anyaegbunam was ordained priest on February 13, 1898 as the first Ibo Pastor by the Rt. Rev.

H. Tugwell, the Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa at Lokoja.

He was instrumental to the establishment of Iyi-Enu Hospital, Onitsha, St. Monica's School, Ogbunike, and St. Paul's College, Awka and C.M.s. Central School, Onitsha.

He worked favourably with Bishops H. Tugwell, B. Lasbrey, S.A. Crowther and J.S. Hill.

He was a member of the first Synod of the Niger Diocese as well as the pioneer of what is known today as Diocese on the Niger born in 1919.

He sang the song of Simeon, the "Nunc Dimittis" on Saint Barnabas' Day June 11, 1937 when the Venerable Alphonso Chukwuma Onyeabo was consecrated Assistant Bishop on the Niger.

In his views about the preservation of the Onitsha culture and traditions, he believed that the relics of tools for ozo titled man should be preserved for posterity.

He was a religious man and maintained the Mosaic law that sabbath days be restricted to rest and not for chopping wood, etc.

BY MR. J.O. ONYEJEKWE



H.R.H. SAMUEL OKOSI I

OBI OKOSI I — 1850 — 1931

THIS narration is a conscious effort to reflect intimate and background knowledge of the Obi Okosis as individuals who lived among their contemporaries at certain period of Onitsha history. The story is not legendary but rather facts and information culled from various writers and set down in a more logical sequence of events. In the Groundwork of the History and Culture of Onitsha, the author indicated that Obi Okosi I was born in 1852. On the other hand, the report on "The Dispute over the Obishop of Onitsha" states that Gbasiuzo Okosi was born in 1850. When it is remembered that Obi Okosi I was the elder full brother of Gbasiuzo Okosi, the two dates look contradictory and cannot be readily accepted. Bearing in mind however that in those olden days, before the advent of modern family planning, children of the same parents were spaced out at intervals of two to three years which served as breast feeding periods, this anomaly in dates can be conveniently corrected by mere transposition of these dates among the two brothers without prejudice to the original sources of information. Gbasiuzo's years of birth would therefore become 1852 while his brother Samuel Obi Okosi would become 1850 after transposition. With this small permutation a good base has emerged for chronicling the history of Obi Okosi I.

By fortuitous coincidence, Obi Okosi I was exactly seven years old when the Church Missionary Society landed at Onitsha in 1857. It was just the psychological moment which philosophers call nick of time and Okolo Okosi had no difficulty in responding to the persuasion of the mission to imbibe, the white man's education and to yield to religious training. He was therefore among the pioneer pupils of the Church Missionary Society. He served them with fervour and on 23rd November, 1862

he was baptised and given the names John Samuel Okosi i.e. the first names of the two pioneer C.M.S. Missionaries — John Taylor and Samuel Crowther. Taylor regarded this baptism event as very important, unmindful of the pervasive nature of youths. Samuel was then a teenager and in the course of time he began to change his mind. By 1865 he definitely showed signs of inner conflict, ignored all his baptismal promises and rebuffed the missionaries and lapsed back to traditional religion. Crowther was disappointed and Taylor wept. Ever since, he stuck tenaciously to his traditional religion. Then came the time lag—a tremendous time lag of twenty years during which the Roman Catholic Mission arrived in 1885. It was then that Samuel began to review his stand on religion once more. For sometime, he merely sat on the fence watching the innovative practices of the new mission. By then he had attained the age of reason and was matured enough to appreciate what was good for him and to take decision on matters and stand by it.

He was impressed by many works of charity demonstrated by the missionary fathers particularly their spirit of dedication and sacrifice, the Christian Villages established, the leprosariums and many other workshops built by the early Revd. Fathers. All these exercised the mind of Samuel Okosi and in 1890 he abjured traditional religion and protestantism and embraced Catholicism warmly. From thence, he became a zealous companion of catholic missionaries and worked as full time Catechist at Aguleri and Nsugbe. He was still on this active service as catechist when words came to him that he had been chosen as the Obi of Onitsha.

The contest for the vacant stool of Obi of Onitsha created by the death of Obi Anazonwu in 1899 was protracted and could be resolved only by intervention of the Royal Niger Company at Asaba. The descendants of

Ezeoroli wished to retain the throne indefinitely after the death of Obi Anazonwu hence, one Okwuosa from Ogbendida, Odita from Ogbezo and Obiozo - Onye late Anazonwu's son all vied among themselves for the vacant throne. Umudei kindred also had equal right to the throne of Onitsha. They would not stoop low and were rather hell-bent on breaking the chain of succession and then the monopoly. In their characteristic solidarity and family cohesion they put up Samuel Okolo Okosi well educated by the standard of the time.

Gbasiuzo Okosi being handy and resident at Onitsha was merely an accessible alternative to his brother Samuel in case he declined. Here it is pertinent to give the line-up of the Okosi family in the following descending order of seniority:—

- (1) Aniegbuna Okosi already a red cap chief with the title name 'Omodi';
- (2) Emesim Okosi another red cap Chief with the title name 'OWELLE'
- (3) Samuel Okolo Okosi and
- (4) Gbasiuzo Okosi. Erroneous impression was created that Gbasiuzo contested the throne against his brother Samuel. That was not so. He was merely holding fort for him and as soon as Samuel indicated his willingness to be king of Onitsha, Gbasiuzo stepped down and stood solidly behind his brother throughout the duration of the contest. This dispute lasted for a long time and eventually culminated in an Inquiry which decided in favour of Samuel Okolo Okosi.

On recognition in April, 1900, he recrossed the Niger, took his Ozo title and performed certain ceremonies necessarily concomittant with Obishop. Additionally he had all the ancestral qualification. His mother was an Onitsha woman of Odoje origin and he descended from

the line of Chimukwu the second Obi of Onitsha. As to his displaced opponents their heads though were bloody but yet unbowed. They refused to acknowledge Samuel Okolo Okosi as King and he had to contend with their continuous intrigues which lasted to the tail end of his reign. They trampled on his royal prerogatives and despised his person. There was petition galore and unabating pressure to overthrow him. In specific terms, his reign was condemned as untraditional simply because:—

- (a) He was a devout Roman Catholic and could not head an indigenous cult.
- (b) His rituals on Obishop were characterized by failures and inadequacies.
- (c) His recognition resulted from Government intervention and not the outcome of natural emergence.
- (d) He refused to kill his two children who were twins and this was abomination.

The above background depicted gloomy days ahead and indeed the actual reign was both tough and rough to say the least.

On his enthronement Obi Okosi I refused to be honoured as divine and reduced royal homage to minimum. He refused to sacrifice to his ancestors. He stopped human sacrifices and other abominable practices. All these were outrageous aberrations from customs and traditions which rendered him ineligible to be true Onitsha Obi since he would have nothing to do with idols and traditional sacrifices.

He offered a piece of land to the Holy Ghost Missionaries for building a chapel and a school and pending the completion of these structures, he arranged for religious instructions to be given in his premises to about 80 young people both slaves and free born

together. All these religious proclivities earned him the despicable and derisive name of a Christian king in a rather traditional atmosphere. This seemingly religious fanaticism together with trumped up charges on administrative and political blunders made him a square peg in a round hole and indeed uneasy was the head on which he wore the crown. When he made his brother Gbasiuzo Okosi, the Onowu Iyasele in 1911, he was criticised so much so that there was rioting. He was accused of making Ndichies surreptitiously and without regard to proper representation of all the kindreds. For all intent and purpose he was merely exercising royal prerogatives which were never challenged in the time of his predecessors. Part of the report on "The Dispute over the Obishop of Onitsha" reads as follows:— quote

"Immediately upon the death of Chimaevi, both his sons Ebo and Chimukwa alive could not succeed him to the Obishop. (Anwula being dead). The former Ebo who by tradition the eldest and heir being very very old and the latter Chimukwa having in the life time of his father taken the title of Onowu Iyasele — The Prime Minister. Ebo particularly and his brother both of whom did not waive their rights to succeed to the throne had to send for their younger brother, Aroli who was then living at Igale the home town of his mother" unquote.

Chimukwa was therefore — Onowu Iyasele and Prime Minister to his own father Chimaevi. Chimukwu as Onowu Iyasele outlived and survived the short reigns of four Obis to wit Chimukwu, Chimaemie, Nafia and Tasia. They all reigned at very very old age and Tasia even died as regent. It was after the death of Tasia that Aroli, the last son of Chimaevi was sent for by his brothers to return and become Obi. Chimukwa therefore also served his brother Ezearoli as Onowu Iyasele and Prime

Minister. The foregoing appears to be on all fours with the Obi Okosi I relation with his brother Gbasiuzo and then Gbasiuzo's relation with his nephew's James Chukwude Okosi Obi Okosi II. Chimukwa was Prime Minister to his own father Chimaevi — while Gbasiuzo was prime minister to his brother Samuel Okolo Okosi. The same Chimukwa was prime minister to his brother — Ezearoli while the same Gbasiuzo was prime minister to his nephew Obi Okosi II, One therefore fails to appreciate why the appointments made during the Okosis' regimes generated so much feud and criticised with temerity.

Until recently Obi appointed Ndichies of all calibres in his discretion after consultation with his immediate family. The position of Obis in those ancient days was rather autocratic. Appointment of Ndichies was by application and suitability as decided solely by the Obi. It was not by any form of imposition in order to guarantee kindred representation. If one did not apply, it would not be imposed on him no matter his kindred. It was quite evident in those ancient days that Obi and the royal family often fenced themselves round with kinsmen for self preservation which was more important to them than democratic principles. Royal immunities had indeed afforded Obi Okosi I enormous shield and protection which enabled him to subjugate and control his opponents and to withstand the attacks that menacingly threatened his reign. Non-fraternization and other civil disobedience by some recalcitrant elements of Umuezearli led to punishment by dentition of some powerful sons of that kindred. Odita Ajie was fined £10 while Chima was stripped of his illegal title of Ogene and ordered to hand over his regalia to the Obi in the District Office.

Obi Okosi I was a pleasant and a fine specimen of humanity. He was fairly tall and fair also in complexion

and his handsomeness was proverbial hence the song 'Obi' Sammy malu-mma-na azuaka' - i.e. beautiful on to the back of his palm. He was humorous and always wore a smiling countenance beneath which lay all unpredictable signs of diplomacy. He was dedicated to the welfare of his family and had the foresight to train and groom his son early in the act of governance and kingship. He sent him for training under the tutelage of Alake of Abeokuta. James Okosi, later Obi Okosi II found the training rather tedious and complained on several occasions that the type of manual labour undertaken was derogatory to the status of a prince. His father was merely concerned with good training for his son no more no less. When James could not bear the tedium of the training any longer, Alake advised him on what to do in order to obtain his release. The advice worked as planned for as soon as James told his father that he had exhausted the training programme except the course leading to priesthood, the father asked him to hasten to Abeokuta and bring back all his things for he never sent him for priesthood.

Obi Okosi I enjoyed a robust health and never missed any of his ofala festivals till the last one in 1931. He was almost always with his brother Gbasiuzo discussing state and royal matters. His pastime was mainly engaged on inspection of the labour force working in his vast orchard of citrus plants and other juicy and succulent fruits — mangoes, oranges, guava, bananas, Cashew, coffee. He was a marksman to some extent, interesting himself in shooting small animals that inhabited the bush adjoining the palace. On many occasions, children unaware of his presence in the farm would climb the mango trees and when caught these children were given minor flogging. On other occasions, the Obi would keep a good distance from the children and the mere jingle bells of ankle bracelets tied to

both legs - would frighten the children so much so that they would flee away in fear. On noticing them at run, Obi was greatly amused and would roar in laughter that was almost hysterical. Nevertheless, Obi Okosi I was exceedingly kind to children and would at times call them together and distribute dried meat which constituted the main attraction of these children to Ime Obi Palace.

Turbulent and disturbed as the reign was, yet it witnessed considerable achievements in the spheres of religion, education, economics and politics of the Town. In 1900 — Silver Coins replaced cowries in Onitsha. In 1901 — Native Court was established. In 1901 — Roman Catholic Catechism was translated in Ibo by Ephraim Agha.

In 1903 — Foundation stone of Christ Church Old Market Road was laid.

In 1905 — Military Headquarters was transferred from Asaba to Onitsha and marriage licence was also introduced in the same year.

In 1906 — Telegraph Cable linked Asaba and Onitsha and two government schools one for girls were also opened in the same year.

In 1907 — Slaves were released and handed over to their respective homes to be sent to school and in the same year also Government hospital was built at Onitsha and licence to bear firearms was introduced.

In 1910 — Native Court Ordinance was promulgated

In 1912 — St. Mary's School was built at its permanent site at Inland Town, Onitsha and so also was Y.W.C.A.

In 1916 — B.C.M was opened by Bishop Tugwell

In 1917 — Otu Nkwo Eze Onitsha was transferred from Otu Okwodu to its present permanent site.

In 1920 — First Newspaper the 'DAWN' was published in Onitsha by Coulson Labour and Scout Movement was introduced in the same year.

In 1922 — Foundation stone of D.M.G.S. was laid

In 1923 — Chief Isaac Okechukwu Mba was appointed member of Legislative Council.

In 1925 — Revd. Brother Healey opened Telegraph School at Onitsha and in the same year Chief Sam S.C. Obianwu was appointed member of Legislative Council.

In 1927 — Taxation Census took place and Poll tax was eventually introduced.

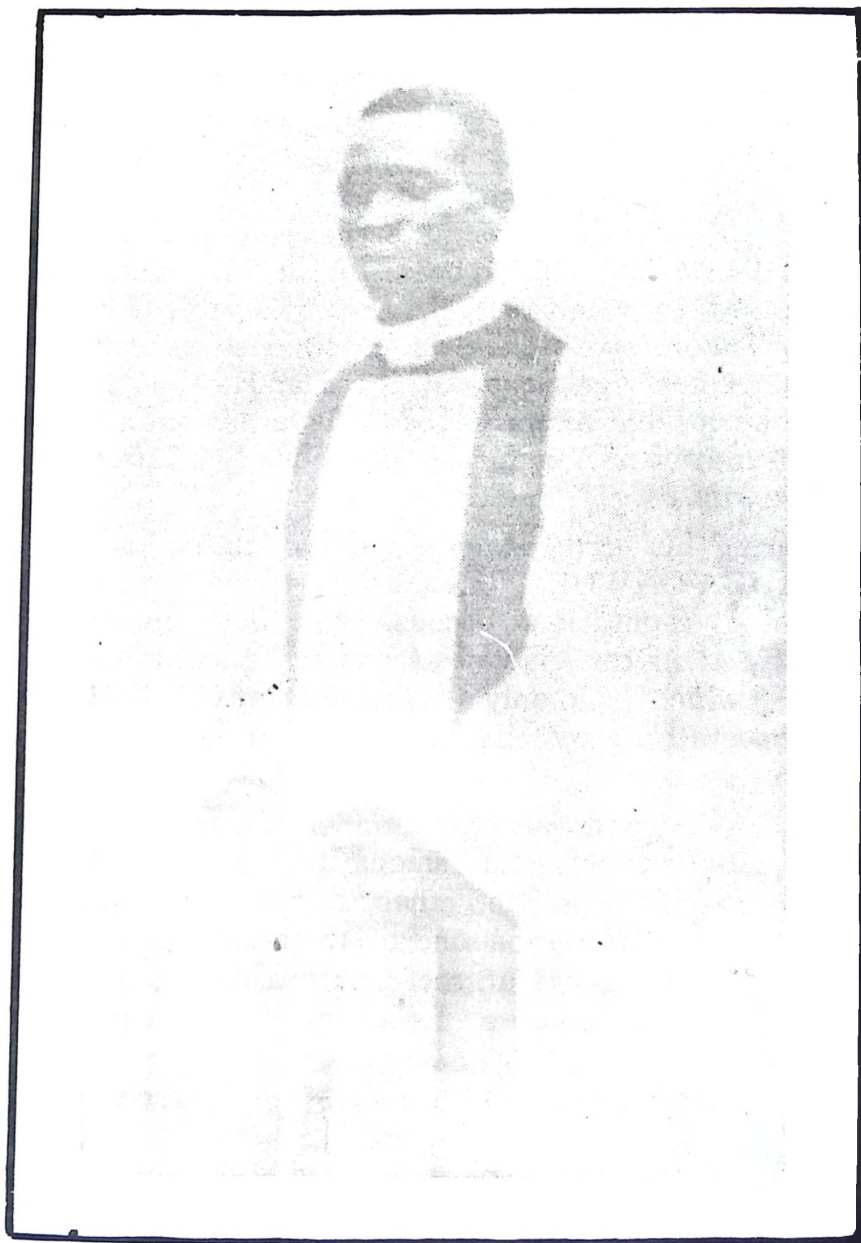
In 1928 — Holy Rosary Convent was built and in the same year Onitsha — Nkwelle Road was constructed.

In 1929 — Pipe-borne water was installed at Onitsha.

In 1930 — The first indigenous Onitsha man and the first Ibo man in person of John Cross Anyogu was ordained a Roman Catholic Priest.

Obi Okosi I did all he could to preserve the glory that was Onitsha — The beloved Onitsha — the sanctuary of customary law and order and the land of contrasts famed for its markets, schools and churches. He died in March, 1931 and his last ofala — The public ceremonious intimation of his demise was celebrated in December of the same year.

By Akunne A.A. Bosah



LATE VEN. H.O. NWEJE
Founder 1909, Life Governor C.M.S.

THE VEN. HEZEKIAH OKOLOGWUGWU NWEJE

THE Ven. Hezekiah Okologwugwu Nweje was the son of Onwuraiwe Nweje and Uzogo Nweje (nee Ikwuaziri) of Ogbeozoma Village in Onitsha Town. His wife, Madam Margaret Nweje (nee Oboli) was the daughter of Chief Stephen Oboli Nwabueze, the Ijeagwu of Onitsha. The wife was so huge and beautiful that she commanded the personality and respect of the people of Onitsha. They had one son and two daughters. He was a member of Omekome Age Grade of Onitsha. He was born at Ogboli Olosi in Onitsha in 1874. His father was a farmer and a musician. His mother was equally a farmer and a house wife.

During his early days he was popularly known as OCHUBA-ONWUDE (Fast runner). He earned this enviable reputation because he was particularly interested in the display of one masquerade (OTUULICHE) which could only attract and capture the delight of spectators by its agility and rare athletic performance.

He was a good dancer, drummer of various heathen musical instruments and famous in "Iyaugba" dancing group, prominent in the display of different masquerades. It was on one of these occasions that he entered into the net of the Catechist George Nicholas Anyaegbunam during a period of open-day-preaching on one Eke-Sunday. After hearing the gospel message and the rhythms of musical songs sung by the Christians (being a man interested in music) he joined the crusade. It was there and then that the Catechist G. Anyaegbunam took him to his fold and converted him to christianity. His knowledge of traditional religion quickened his adaptability to christian religion. It was

in the Mission School at Immanuel Church Onitsha that he was taught the principles of christianity and C.M.S. doctrine. He began school when parents never allowed their children to attend schools. To give him more firm footing in christian background, the Pastor handed him over to the Rev. Spenser, Principal, C.M.S. Training College, Obosi, where he finished his Primary School life and became a teacher. The Rev. G.N. Anyaegbunam and the Rt. Rev. A.C. Onyeabo were his God fathers.

He served as a pupil Teacher for many years. He was one of the pioneers of the famous St. Paul's College, Awka. To quote from his words — "We used to go to Awka from Onitsha via Aguleri, then to Achalla and finally to Awka. On request for land, Awka people offered us an impenetrable abandoned piece of land where rejected twins and cast-away babies were thrown to die and rot, and the sacrificial animals offered to idols were also dumped there".

The very site is the place where the Awka College of Education now situates.

Mr. Hezekiah O. Nweje was baptised and one of his God-fathers was the Rev. George Nicholas Anyaegbunam.

He was sent to St. Paul's C.M.S. College, Awka with four other students to train as Catechists. He was later sent to St. Andrew's C.M.S. College, Oyo, preparatory to his ordination and priesthood. He served for some years before he was ordained priest along with Rev. Ekpunobi in 1914. He practised the christian doctrine in various churches as Minister of God under the West Indian and European Missionaries. He served partly under Venerable S.R. Smith, fully under Ven. G.T. Basden and Ven. Wilcock.

He served as a pupil teacher and catechist under the Rt. Rev. Charles Philips and the Rt. Rev. Isaac Oluwole,

an Assistant Bishop. He became a priest in 1914 when the Rt. Rev. H. Tugwell was the Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa. He witnessed the change of this Diocese to the Diocese on the Niger.

He was posted to Asaba after his ordination where he did the youthful days of his Ministry. He evangelised a large extent of the area, opened many churches and schools up to and including Agba, Ogwashiukwu etc. He lived such a christian and spiritual life, that the sum total of his behaviour both in and out of his home and livelihood, earned him a solemn alias "HOLY NWEJE". He kept this mantle till his death. Hence, Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Ovwelle of Onitsha, described him in his funeral oration thus "His Life is a living institution and a monument".

He was later transferred to Christ Church District, Onitsha, including Obosi, Ogidi, Nnewi etc. as the District Superintendent.

The Rev. H.O. Nweje was the Superintendent of Onitsha District when the Rt. Rev. B. Lasbrey was enthroned the first Diocesan Bishop on the Niger. He hosted the first Niger Diocesan Synod held at Christ Church, Onitsha in 1922 under the Presidency of the Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. B. Lasbrey with the Archdeacon, the Venerable Crowther in attendance from the Niger Pastorate. He served under the second Diocesan Bishop the Rt. Rev. C.J. Patterson D.D., partly as Priest Superintendent and as Archdeacon of Onitsha and Owerri.

He was conferred the insignia "Life Governor" of the CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY HOUSE, England on the recommendation of the Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. B. Lasbrey at the Niger Diocesan Synod Session in the thirties. The Church Missionary Society, England

honoured him by conferring on him the insignia "LIFE GOVERNOR" in appreciation of his christian exemplary and spiritual life.

It was during his tenure of office in Onitsha that he proposed and master-minded the establishment of the famous Dennis Memorial Grammar School Onitsha in 1923—25. It was his brainchild. He was later transferred to Nkwerre in Orlu — Okigwe District. Here again, he proposed the establishment of a secondary school which prompted the christian women to shoulder the responsibility of erecting dormitories and classrooms for the students of St. Catherine's Secondary School, Nkwerre. He was appointed the Archdeacon of Onitsha in 1945 by the Rt. Rev. C.J. Patterson, the Niger Diocesan Bishop. In 1948 he was posted to Owerri Archdeaconry after the death of the Venerable Victor Nworah Umunna D.Th. — (Onunekwuluora). He remained there until his retirement as the Archdeacon of Owerri after 50 years of meritorious service in the vine yard of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

He was married to the widow of the Rev. Lele in 1950 at All Saints Cathedral, Egbu, Owerri, six years after the death of his first wife. They lived for some years and the wife eloped because she could not cope with his way of life which was so holy and so matched with the words of Jesus in St. Matthew's Gospel Chapter 10 verses 37 & 38 "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me". He was a vegetarian and his hobby was reading and horticulture.

He died in 1962, at the old age of 86. His first wife left with him a son and a daughter, namely Mr. Tagbo Nweje and Mabel Nweje to mourn him. In 1914, after his ordination, he spearheaded the reconciliation of traditional religion with christian religion in regard to

Ozo title initiation. Even though the European missionaries could not accept his suggestions, yet it left a milestone for future successful dialogue on the issue.

He continued the same dialogue in 1917 and Rev. Ekpunobi of Obosi was present at the meeting. He took the matter again with both English and Ibo people and entered into dialogue but because of diversities of opinion affecting the understanding among the audience it was deferred 'sine die'. During the meeting, as a man who was fast and had thorough knowledge of traditional religion he pin-pointed those aspects which could be married to the christian religion because he was not entirely against native laws and custom. He advocated the traditional heathen practices of "ISA IFI" peculiarly done by way of confession by women in the presence of the husband and relations or at the death of the husband.

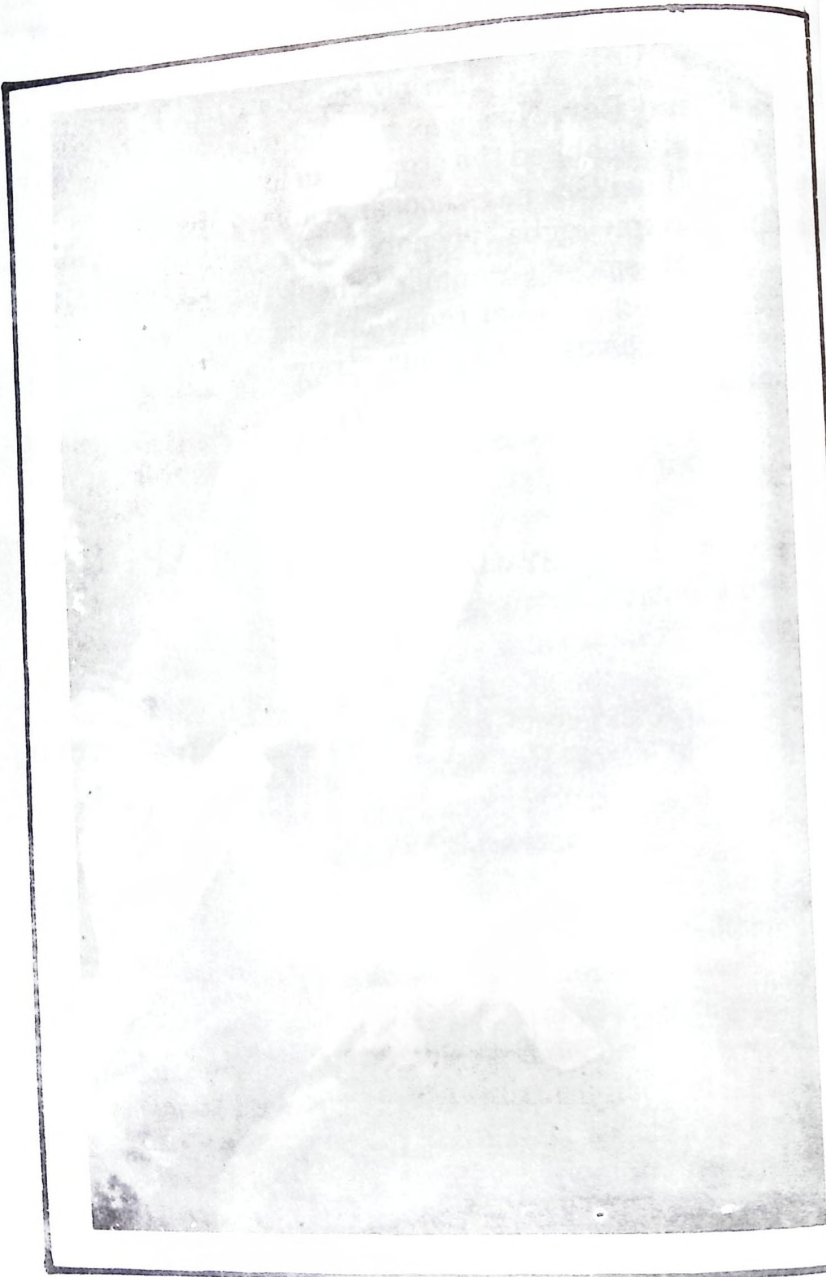
In 1942, while delivering a lecture to church workers (teachers) he anticipated using palm wine and fried yams instead of the usual bread and wine in administering the Holy communion, but it was not implemented. He was very strict in administration and maintained high standard of discipline. He was spiritually number one-christian among the religious clergymen.

No story of Holy Nweje will be complete without mention of one of the events that earned him the sobriquet HOLY. The story could not be better told than in the words of our greatest story teller, Professor Chinua Achebe "the Venerable Archdeacon Nweje a saint and divine, whose sometimes quixotic acts of holiness and other worldliness are recounted to this day; who once surprised a thief digging up his yams but was less distressed by that than the possibility of the man hurting himself in his reckless flight through the forest of spiky yam stakes. "Stop! you will hurt yourself"! he called out in vain."

Another story of Holy Nweje was told by late Boycott King Mazi Mbonu Ojike in his *My Africa*. He recounted the occasion when he was playing or possibly vamping on the organ during a Christian worship in DMGS, Onitsha. Ojike was then on the Staff of the Grammar School and Rev. Nweje as he then was, was officiating. He quickly rebuked the organist in loud resonant voice. "Onye Nkuzi Grama School anyi abiaro aba isu iwoliwo.

Bulu okpu ogba yi naba". Translated, the Rev. gentleman said, "Grammar School Teacher, we are not here to listen to (what today may be equivalent to) rock music. Go away with your straw hat" which was in fashion in the thirties.

BY J.O. ONYEJEKWE



HON. L.O. MBA

HON. ISAAC OKECHUKWU MBA

I.O. Mba was one of the pioneer Nigerians in the colonial civil service and the first Onitsha man to be nominated by the colonial government to a national body, the Legislative Council. Mba was one of the very few Igbos who was highly educated at the end of the 19th Century.

I.O. Mba was born around 1860 in Onitsha, son of Chief Mba Akalam of Umudei Village Onitsha who, with Okosi I was the an early convert to Christianity in Onitsha in 1862 and took the name Christopher. Christopher Mba and his convert wife were persecuted and harassed by the Onitsha community because of their faith but they preserved. They wanted their son Isaac to enter the Ministry and allowed him to be sent by the C.M.S. Mission in Onitsha to the C.M.S. Training Institution in Lagos where he so distinguished himself that he was one of the privileged few Nigerians sent to Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone in 1880. While in Fourah Bay College, Mba gave evidence for the crown in a court case in which a sierra Leonean couple, Johns, were charged with killing a girl in their employment.

On his return to Onitsha, I.O. Mba was the only indigenous mission agent in the Niger Mission all the others being either Yoruba or Sierra Leonean. He was a brilliant catechist who specialised in translating part of the Bible into Igbo. In 1889, along with Archdeacon Johnson, Mba translated two portions of Four gospels into Igbo. Later Mba criticised the suspension of Archdeacon Johnson and the general move by the Church to remove Nigerian Clergy. Because of his public criticisms, Mba was dismissed in 1890 from the mission service. What the church foolishly rejected, the government took up. On 11th February 1892 I.O. Mba entered the clerical branch of the Consular Service of the

Oil Rivers Protectorate. In 1902, with the inauguration of an audit system for the Protectorate, Mba was appointed by Sir Ralph Moore as the first Audit Clerk, first class.

Later Mba was seconded to the Calabar Provincial Secretariat until 1907 when he was appointed to the Public Works Department, Warri, as an Assistant Chief Clerk. This was a very high position for a Nigerian and it was from here that Mba retired in August, 1910. Mba retired to Onitsha where he became a member of the Agbalanze Society and played an active role in the Onitsha Native Authority. He was given a salary under the Onitsha Native Authority as Waterside Chief of £100 p.a.

The colonial government had created a Legislative Council in Lagos in 1872 on which sat a few 'unofficial' Nigerians. The Council had no executive powers. After amalgamation of the Colony and the Protectorates of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1914, the Legislative Council was extended to provide for representation of Nigerians outside Lagos. However, the effectiveness of the African unofficial members in the Legislative Council was limited by the official majority, by the Governor's power to initiate all legislation, by his veto and by the over-riding powers of orders-in council and Acts of the British Parliament. Nonetheless, the Legislative Council did allow for the views of Nigerians to be expressed through their representatives in the Legislative Council.

In 1922, I.O. Mba was appointed to the Legislative Council to represent the Ibo Division. The other areas represented in the East were Rivers Division, Calabar and the Niger African Traders, whom Chief S.C. Obianwu was appointed to represent in 1925. Thus the first two Igbo members of the Nigerian Legislative Council were both from Onitsha.

One of the high points of the Hon. Mba's time in the Legislative Council was his recorded opposition to the Bill of 1927 which was to make the Native Revenue Ordinance applicable to the five Eastern provinces. Mba, Obianwu and the members for Rivers and Egba Divisions opposed it.

Partly because of this, the Resident of Onitsha arranged a tour of the already taxed provinces of the West for a member of Warrant Chiefs and influential men in the province in February, 1928. Mba, Obianwu and Ebosie represented Onitsha.

The opposition to taxation was futile but their warnings that the provinces were that ready were proven to have been accurate two years later when there was massive resistance to the payment of tax in the Eastern provinces.

Mba suffered from ill health the last few years of his life. He had to go to U.K. for a cataract operation in 1929. He had applied for an advance from the Onitsha Native Authority to help defray the costs of the operation. The Resident recommended that an exception to the general rule against advances be made in Mba's case since he had rendered good service to the Native Authority. The Secretary, Southern Provinces accepted the Resident's recommendations but by that time it appeared that Mba had tired of bureaucratic delays and set off on his own.

I.O. Mba was respected both by his Nigerian colleagues and by the Colonial government, as is borne out by the tributes paid him in the House after his death, 19th June, 1930. The Lt. Governor of the Southern Provinces moved a motion of tribute. "The House would agree that the late Honourable Mba possessed in a high degree those qualities which made

him a most desirable member of the Assembly". The First Member for Lagos, Hon. Dr. Adeniyi Jones declared "if the Honourable gentleman were selfish and had lived a secluded life instead of making all exertion to serve the interests of his people, he might have lived longer. But placed as he was in a responsible position, he did not wish to be left behind in doing his bit, such was his love of the people whom he represented". The House stood for several seconds in tribute to the honourable Mba in what the Daily Times, 25th June, 1930 described as "perhaps the finest tribute ever paid in that Chamber to the memory of a deceased member."

By Nina E. Mba

BISHOP A.C. ONYEABO

BISHOP ALPHONSO CHUKWUMA ONYEABO
O.B.E.

THE Right Rev. Alphonso Chukwuma Onyeabo was born in 1879 at Umuezeoroli in Onitsha. He was the great great grandson of Eze Aroli of Onitsha; great grand son of Eze Olisa, grand son of Ogamezi who married Omenuko Ebuzue of Ogbeozoma village. To them were born Egboka, Emeka and Onyeabo; His father Onyeabo was a prominent Chief of a quarter in Umuaroli, popularly known as Ogbeonuilo, with the title of Onoli of Onitsha. His mother was Madam Rebecca Nwanyife Onyeabo, elder sister of Rev. George Nicholas Anyaegbunam of Umuasele village Onitsha. His parents died when he was very young. Mr. George Nicholas Anyaegbunam took him as his house-servant. He spent most of his life at Umuasele village, Onitsha in Mr. G.N. anyaegbunam's compound.

When Anyaegbunam was converted and started his missionary work, he used to accompany him. He was baptised and later confirmed by the Rt. Rev. S.A. Crowther. One of his God-fathers was his cousin Mr. G.N. Anyaegbunam.

He started school at Immanuel Church School, Onitsha, under the early missionaries, with their tutor and guide, Rev. Taylor.

Some of his contemporaries were Chief Samuel Obianwu (Owelle), Mr. H. Venn. Okwusogu, Mr. D.O. Okagbue, Mr. Kemmer of Brass, Mr. David Baikie of Lokoja and Mr. Obed Azikiwe (Zik's father) He attended the (C.M.S.) Church Missionary Society School at the Old Compound, Onitsha, which was later known as the C.M.S. Primary Central School, Onitsha, under the tutorship of the late Mr. Isaac O. Mba (later Chief I.O.

Mba, the Owelle of Onitsha), between 1891—1896. He was one of the pioneer students of Government College, Onitsha.

He was sent for further studies by the G.N. Anyaegbunam to the C.M.S. College, Asaba, which was later shifted to Awka, and known as St. Paul's C.M.S. College, Awka. He remained at the C.M.S. College, Asaba, from 1897—1899. He held the office of Schoolmaster from 1900—1902. In 1903 he was sent to the C.M.S. College, Oyo, for a Catechist's course.

On his return in 1904, he was posted to Ogbunike C.M.S. Church as a Catechist. In 1905 to Oraifite. 1906 to Nnobi and 1907—1908 to Obosi. Here, he chose a caring and perceptive wife who helped to direct him.

In 1908 he was married to Deborah Nwugoye Emeagwamo of Umunachi, at Obosi Church. She was chosen from among the students of St. Monica's College Ogbunike. They were blessed with ten children but they outlived three - Sussie (Mrs. Ofodile), James a student of D.M.G.S., Onitsha and David. The eldest son Sidney died in 1975 while the remaining six are doing their best by the help of God.

During the Kingship tussle after the death of Obi Okosi II, he was approached to take over the post but he turned it down even though he appreciated the offer and to quote him "I have been coronated by God as a Priest in His field."

He married on the same day with the later Rev. A.M. Ekpunobi and Mr. Obianwu. As a Catechist, he published his own banns of marriage.

He was ordained Deacon at the C.M.S. College, Oyo, on August 22 1909. He worked as a Deacon at C.M.S. Church, Akwukwu, from 1909 to 1911.

He was transferred to Owerri District as a Deacon with headquarters at Egbu from 1912 — 13.

He was ordained Priest in 1914 at Egbu Owerri. It was during his tenure of office as the Superintendent of Owerri District that Archdeacon Dennis and his team of translators transferred from Onitsha to Egbu for the translation of Ibo Bible. The team was made up of Mr. T.D. Anyaegbunam, Mr. B. Nsenu, and Mr. C.D. Green of Bonny. He used to supervise them at his leisure.

As the Superintendent of Owerri District he used to cover the whole area, today, known as Owerri and Okigwe/Orlu Dioceses. He was then travelling on foot, on bicycle, on motorcycle and later by car. Facility for mobility to enhance the emancipation of the inhabitants, and for the evangelisation of the area was so minimal that people trekked long distances to avail themselves of bare subsistence.

The Rev. A.C. Onyeabo engaged himself in travelling over thirty miles, to and fro, in a day to administer Holy Communion and or conduct baptismal services. Despite the onerous duties, his Christlike perspective always set his mind to positive thinking and habituating himself to hard work. After certain number of years of tedious travelling, he was given a motor cycle with an attachment of one wheel basket carriage which enabled him to go in company of his wife, otherwise, the wife was always carried to women conference meetings on a hammock by four stalwarts.

By the courtesy of Christian principles on humanity the then parochial committee of each church had selected members who would travel to distant churches to carry the property of transferring church teachers popularly known as Station Agents, from their old stations to the new ones. The trekking was tremendous but was always done in good faith as christians. Un

these circumstances, christians, especially the Pastor, himself, invariably displayed extraordinary calm under fire, a calm too deep and masterful to be mere pretence.

He was the Priest who shepherded the Captain Stuart expedition to Ezinihite in Mbaise. During the expedition, Captain Stuart was killed and his bicycle was hung on top of a very big tree at Obizi. As the result of the murder of the Captain, the area was bombarded by the Army. The Rev. A.C. Onyeabc pleaded for peace which brought the attack to an end.

In the ten Owerri Districts, he established schools, which he named Central Schools because he located them at the centres of the areas. The schools were at Egbu, Nekede, Mbieri, Ata, Ife, Nkwerre, Ezeoke, Ndizuogu and Anara.

In the then Owerri District, he established hostels for the training of future mothers, vocational schools for educational training and Sunday Schools for Scriptural and moral upbringing. In order to help scholars who attended schools from distant places from the central schools he built boarding houses for their accommodation. Before his transfer, he laid the foundation stone of the All Saint's Cathedral Egbu.

He was transferred to Christ Church District, Onitsha, in December, 1935 after 24 years of hardship at Owerri. He was appointed the first indigenous Ibo Archdeacon for the Niger Diocese to Niger Delta Area in 1936.

The Archbishop of Canterbury elected him the Assistant Bishop in Niger Diocese in 1937 on the recommendations of the Right Rev. Bishop Lasbrey. He

was consecrated Bishop in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, in 1937, and was posted to be in-charge of Niger Delta Area as Assistant Bishop, based at Aba. The Late Sir Louis Mbanefo was an eye witness to his consecration.

The trauma of experience he gained in his previous ministry made him stronger in his faith and more sensitive to his responsibility before God. He recognised the responsibility that accompanied authority hence he planned his episcopal work by evangelising the hinterland and appointing the elite among them to responsible posts. By this method of approach, the riverine areas around Port Harcourt, Bonny, and Brass, developed spiritually, socially and educationally.

He opened up many towns and established schools and secondary schools. These sources of development went *pari-passu* with the establishment of churches and evangelism.

He held the office of a Bishop from 1937 to 1948 when the cells of his body began to weaken and called for rest. He gloriously retired in 1948 after a comprehensive meritorious work in the vineyard of our Lord.

Even though he had retired, yet the Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. C.J. Patterson, held him as his page and counsellor. He was so indefatigable that he continued voluntary post-work for some years.

As Christopher Wren is associated with the building of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, so should Bishop Alphonso Chukwuma Onyeabo be associated with the Anglican Communion of Nigeria (known today as Imo Anambra and Rivers states.)

He was the man who supported the motion tabled by the Ven. Victor Nworah Umunna in the Niger Diocesan Board Meeting in 1948 that a Cathedral should be built for the Niger Diocese. In supporting the motion, he donated twenty five pounds as the first donor and the

first donation on which the foundation was laid. Twelve years after, the foundation stone was laid by Sir John Macpherson, the then Governor-General of Nigeria in 1952 and — baptised with the name "All Saints' Cathedral, Onitsha.

He was a good adviser, a logician, a disciplinarian and an administrator. His spirit of self-determination made him traverse the whole of Owerri Province without bitterness and rancour.

The period of his retirement coincided with the awakening of politics in Nigeria and he withstood the test of time. His contributions to spiritual politics in Onitsha bridged the shackles of maddening tension and order restored. He was then a figure to be reckoned with among his equals.

He died on the 14th February, 1954 at Iyi Enu Hospital, Ogidi after a brief illness. He was posthumously awarded the Order of British Empire by the British Government for his meritorious achievements.

He was a full fledged member of Saint Stephen's Church, Onitsha. He was instrumental for the establishment and the development of the church.

He harboured early converted widows in his house to save them from molestation.

He allowed successive church teachers to quarter in his compound until the church was able to provide accommodation.

He was a man of policy. He believed in the division of amenities and official appointments with priorities based on minority areas.

This basic policy earned him very high popularity among his diocesans throughout his missionary work as a minister of God.

BY J.O. ONYEJEKWE



J.M. STUART—YOUNG

EXCEPT for his books and sonnets which may be found in old newspapers and archives, there is nothing around in Onitsha or elsewhere to show that J.M. Stuart-Young alias Odeziaku ever walked on this earth. Sometime in 1945 I came across his book titled "The Iniquitous Coaster". No foreigner, least of all a white man, was well accepted as a native and member of the community as Odeziaku Young was in Onitsha.

In 1934 when Zik returned from his sojourn Overseas. Onitsha his hometown naturally organised a reception for him at the only respectable hall available then. It was the old Magistrate Court opposite the DPS at the beginning of Court Road, Onitsha. Who else but Dr. J.M. Stuart Young was educated enough to chairman the occasion. It was said he introduced Zik in these words, "He who knows not and knows not that he knows not is a fool, teach him. He who knows and knows not that he knows, is asleep waken him. He who knows and knows that he knows is both a wiseman and a leader, follow him". This prophetic advice had since been vindicated by the role Zik played in the history of Nigeria. But it takes greatness in a person to see and recognise greatness in others.

He wrote with confidence and journalistic flair on many subjects of topical interest. No wonder he contributed to all the few newspapers of the thirties and forties like the Eastern Nigerian Mail edited by J.V. Clinton in Calabar and the Observer of Port Harcourt edited by Rev. L. Potts-Johnson of Enitonia High School fame. When the West African Pilot was founded by Zik in 1937, Odeziaku was a contributor and columnist. One of his poems in the West African Pilot of July, 14th, 1938 is reproduced here.

Fortitude

"Beneath the noon, Night gathers gray and cold;
A sail leans over the sea
No more of pain my hungry heart may hold —
It grieves unceasingly.
And yet in darkest nooks the flowers breath out
their fragrance and their dew;
Shall I more selfish be? — or conquer doubt,
Faith, hope and love renew?
Just heaven fend! Still throbs with love and praise
Each little woodland brake.
Dark though the world may seem and full of woe,
I would not weep — not I,
But smile upon the uphill way I go
Until I smiling die.
For true it is, no thorny wreath we wear
Need bring despairing frown —
Our cross we bear as long as we can bear;
Past that we lay it down!"

In his book of essays, "Morning Yet On Creation Day", Chinua Achebe said it all, of J.M. Stuart-Young: "there was a strange Englishman living in Onitsha — J.M. Stuart-Young, scholar, mystic, trader, single handed fighter against the new European monopolistic cartels. He was a legend among the Ibo even in his life time, for was he not a lover of the wealth-giving but fiendishly jealous mermaid, queen of the Niger River? They called him Eke (python) which he disliked and Odoziaku (arranger of wealth) which he didn't dislike. He was a mystery man and nothing is known for certain about his life before he fell like a comet into Onitsha. He said he was a doctor of philosophy and perhaps he was."

Odoziaku was said to be born in Manchester England and came to Onitsha in the twenties through Liberia where he stayed for sometime before sailing to and anchoring in Onitsha.

J.M. Stuart-Young was noted for his eccentricity as shown by the ease with which he built and demolished his buildings. He once set up an abode at the junction of (Ogbommanu) Old and New Market Roads, Onitsha with a big signboard proclaiming it as HALF WAY TO THE BUSH. He built a provisions and haberdashery shop at the present site of late Onwuije Bosah's property at New Market, Road Opposite Akunne J. Akpali Ifeajuna's house he established a sports office with the bold initials of O.D.A.L. meaning Onitsha District Amateur League. This building with the passage of time came in handy for day and night private schools which was popular in Onitsha in the early forties when ex Yaba College graduate tried their hands at teaching secondary school subjects.

Odeziaku had a fashion of wearing a shirt often white and dark trousers and no tie or hat. He wore a pendant and had an umbrella which he used when it rained and as a walking stick when it did not.

He loved pets like canaries, monkeys, parrots and cats. He lived an ascetic life. If he was ever married back home there was nothing to show for it. He was not known to be associated with women except strictly on business. Legend had it that he was married to mammy water or the mermaid who paid him nocturnal visits and was said to be the source of his vast wealth.

Odoziaku took ill in 1938 and was hospitalised in Braithwaite Nursing Home Port Harcourt formerly European Hospital, before Governor Arthur Richards was forced by popular nationalistic pressure to abolish the discrimination in public places like hospitals and

hotels. That was in 1947 after the Bristol Hotel incident in which a coloured man Mr. Cummings from the Colonial Office London was refused accommodation in Bristol Hotel Lagos, because of the colour of his skin. This will surely sound strange to many a Nigerian born within the past 40 – 50 years.

With his characteristic keen sense of humour, J.M. Stuart-Young wrote this sonnet after his operation in the then European Hospital at P.H The sonnet dated Sunday 1st May, 1938 partly referring to the burly form of late Dr. Braithwaite after whom the hospital was named runs thus:—

AFTER OPERATION

“His burly form is tonic. He’s respected
By all who realise eccentric ways
Conceal a skill and knowledge that might raise
The Dead to life. Finding me weak dejected:
“Still feeling sore? that’s to be expected
After the cutting up and dressing -down
of Thursday last!” Now grins replace the frown.
Proving by Fate this time you’re not rejected.
From room to room he passes with a jest;
Those capable hands, that rolling Gumberland
Voice: “Buck up my boy! Good luck my bonny
Eat well! Want you to be happy while you’re
here,” Believing Pain makes hearts at last rejoice
Because God doeth all things for the best.”

Odoziaku later died. Onitsha was thrown into confusion and deep mourning for losing a dear one. All known masquerades, native orchestras from *olu na igbo* (far and near) attended the funeral. Salvos of gun and cannon shots, rent the air. The burial was undoubtedly unprecedented in the mommoth crowd it drew in the

annals of Onitsha particularly for one who did not come from Onitsha.

Earthly possessions meant nothing to Odozaku. He had before his death willed all to his steward, one Obinwa. Although he was both a success and successful he had never put his heart or mind in worldly treasures at this poem by him titled *Sic Venit Gloria* shows.

“Better bestow your all and penniless die
Than hoard a pitiful heap of futile pelf;
Into the vastness of Eternity
One only thing you take yourself
Better have faith in falsehood to the last,
Bearing illusion into age from youth,
Than ever Beauty double dim mantle cast,
Or scorn the radiant light of Truth!
Better be called a fool, an “innocent”
Trusting that by your grave and hearts will weap,
Than boast the mockery of a monument
Beneath whose marbled weight you cannot sleep!
Write: Life was sweeter just because he lived,
And Death less dreadful just because he died!

O, ye who study Christ’s supremest story
Following the path all valiant souls have trod,
Learning yet one truth — life only lifts to glory
When man forever seeks a nobler God!”

For a man who walked with and was inspired by the light of Truth all his life, it is no wonder that J.M. Stuart Young in one of his sonnets forbade any monument above the earth or below the heavens to be built in his memory. All he wanted was to be remembered, if at all, as a “Tryer”.



ONWULJE HAYFORD BOSAH
The first Onitsha man to kill two Leopards

HAYFORD O. BOSAH

ACROSS the stage whereon the Umuosodi family played the symphony of life during the past fifty-three years, there stood the shadow of the short, spare figure of a man, who had dedicated his life to the cause of his family welfare. This man, Hayford Onwuije Bosah, orator, diplomat, herbalist, metaphysician and hunter, passed away at his 41B New Market Road, Onitsha, at midday on the 9th February, 1973.

Born in 1888, he belonged to the AKAGA age grade-the age grade following the Ekwueme age grade in the ascending order of precedence. Early in life, he developed a consuming ardour for the upliftment of the members of UMUOSODI family. He became the most fearless exponent of the doctrine of the UMUOSODI UNITY. He had received from nature a strong and sharp understanding, a rare firmness of temper, and intensity of will. His voice, even when it sank to a whisper, was heard to the remotest audience. And when he strained it to its fullest extent, it shook the surroundings with its peal. His play of countenance was wonderful; he frequently disconcerted a hostile speaker by a single glance of indignation.

Hayford attained his maturity about the year 1910, when he made his debut in the social and political arena of the Onitsha people. Coeval with his rise to prominence among his people at this time, there arrived in the Bosah family an Englishman whose life among the people of Onitsha had influenced the course of history in that city on the Niger. James Murray Stuart Young, Ph.D (Dunelm) poet, rhymist, author, metaphysician and occultist, arrived in Onitsha in 1908, as an official of one of the trading firms nicknamed "palm oil ruffians" and carrying on trade in the area of the then Niger Coast Protectorate.

Owing to some disagreement with the authorities of his firm at its headquarters in England over certain policies, Stuart-Young severed his association with the trading company and set up his one-man trading business in the house he had built within the premises of the home of the Bosah family in New Market Road. He also operated branch-shops in Old Market Road and at the "Half Way to the Bush" point, way up Awka Road.

It was Stuart-Young who imbued Hayford Bosah with the knowledge of the ancient and modern occult lores and practice. He was taught elementary metaphysics, and the art of divination, levitation and the cabala, when Stuart-Young had set up his 'canteens' in Onitsha, he engaged Hayford as his shop-hand. The popularity of the versatile young Hayford Bosah as a shop-hand in those days is within living memory. Hayford's senior brother, Jerry, was also engaged as a shop clerk by Dr. Stuart-Young.

In 1911, Stuart-Young proceeded on a furlough to England taking with him the beloved Hayford Bosah. The pair stayed for six months in England. It is on record that Hayford Bosah was the first Onitsha man to visit England and enjoy the life of happy contact with an English family. He returned to Onitsha with his master and poured out his heart to Onitsha people, regarding the advanced way of life of the white race.

The power of love and devotion to duty to God and man exercised by the mysterious man, Hayford Bosah, was not confined to the affairs and welfare of Umuosidi family. He was by nature fitted to be the leader of men. He led many a man in Onitsha from obscurity to fame. He subsidised indigent families, by providing the wherewithal to rear their offsprings. Hayford's many-sided activities were no less spectacular in the hunting tradition. As a hunter and marksman, he killed a leopard on two occasions, for which exploit he had earned the traditional title of OGBU-IBUA. He was a member of the EGBUNU-OBA Society, which performed its full rites at burial ceremonies.

The burial of this great man on Tuesday, 13th February, 1973, drew together all the sections of Onitsha community, all traditional societies of the Onitsha-ites and the surrounding towns. His body was dressed in the hunter's reddish regalia and encased in a beautiful coffin made of the oldest Nigerian iroko.

The death of Hayford Bosah has provoked, in the minds of many individuals, the oft-repeated question on the riddle of life, as the poet passionately expressed it "Alas for Life, if Thou wart all and not beyond!" Adieu Onwuadikije Bosah, till we meet again.

It is worth noting that the Bosah family of Umuozodi in Umudei Village Onitsha is the part of the conglomerate that constitute the present day Onitsha and this family is the residue of the aboriginal Ozeh. which survived the invasion of early Onitsha immigrants. At the core of this family was late Hayford Onwuije Bosah, a hero by all standard.

The family is large in size as well as in manpower and at least there are no less than one hundred offsprings at present. Ejido Bosah, Ojogbue Ozumba Bosah, Jerry Onyebuchi Bosah and Hayford Onunije Bosah were all prolific and had numerous children and grand children and great grand children - many of whom had made their marks in various spheres of life and have produced administrators, lawyers, doctors, engineers and graduates in many other disciplines.

Prominent among the who's who in this family today are the following personalities.

1. Ogbuefi Nnabuenyi J.N. Bosah Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries and Administrators, London. Retired Deputy Auditor-General of the East Central State of Nigeria, one time General-Manager of the Paramount Hotels Anambra' currently he is the group Chief Internal Auditor Ekene-Dili-Chukwu group of companies. He has produced two medical doctors; one

engineer and other graduates. Ogbuefi Nnabuenyi J.N. Bosah was London trained.

2. Ogbuefi Akunne A.A. Bosah Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries and Administrators, London and retired Deputy Accountant-General of East Central State of Nigeria. One time Chairman of the Eastern States Interim Assets and Liabilities Agency; Past

Member of the Board of Directors Queen Elizabeth's Hospital Umuahia; Past Member of the Board of Directors Government Trading Agency, East Central State Enugu; Ex-Financial Controller and Adviser to several Organisations in Public and Private Sectors. He was London trained and at instance of the Federal Government of Nigeria he travelled extensively to overseas countries like London, Canada, Portugal and Switzerland. He has produced an Engineer and a B.Sc. Graduate in Communications. He loves reading and tennis for his hobby.

3. Mr. Joseph Isaiah Ogbogu Bosah — B.L.; L.L.B. — retired Director of Labour in the Federal Ministry of Labour Employment and Productivity. He was attached to ILO in Geneva for a long time and currently with the African Regional Labour Administration Centre under the United Nations Organization. He shuttles between Nairobi (Kenya) and Harare (Zimbabwe). He has produced at least one doctor and several graduates in various disciplines.
4. Mr. Isaac Azubike Bosah — Assistant Chief Radiographer in the Ministry of Health Anambra. He was London trained.
5. Mr. Benedict Chuba Bosah — Fellow of the Institute of Ceramics and a ceramic Engineer. He was one time Production Manager in the Ceramics Nig. Ltd.

Umuahia and subsequently Production Manager Ceramics Industry Kano.

6. Mr. P.S.D. Bosah — One time Director in the PAMOL (Nig.) Ltd. Sapele. He has produced several graduates in various disciplines.
7. Mr. Emmanuel Amechi Bosah: — Diploma in Journalism Regent Polytechnics London; Associate member of the Institute of Public Relations London. Currently he is the permanent Secretary in the Federal Public Complaints Commission Enugu and also a member of the Governing Council for the Anambra State University of Technology (OSUTECH) Enugu.

By Akunne J. N. Onuora



AKUKALIA OMEDIKE IBEKWE

IF the reader's idea of a hero is only a person who became famous because of some great and daring deed, then, heroism could seem pretty remote today. But if you feel as I do, that a lifetime of great accomplishment and devoted service to others can be as truly, heroic as an act of physical bravery, then one would appreciate real heroism in the life of late Akukalia Omedike Ibekwe, of Odojele Village Onitsha.

At a time in Onitsha when the use of modern medical science was unknown, traditional medicine was the only popular means of health care delivery known to our people. I am referring to a time in our history when there was no maternity homes and hospitals. Even the only hospital at Iyi Enu was still looked upon with skepticism.

It was at this time that a person like Omedike Ibekwe was reputed for his knowledge and use of herbs and uncanny ability to deliver pregnant women. This service was both popular and highly appreciated by the people of Onitsha who could only go to trusted herbalists like Ibekwe.

At the begining of this century when society had not become so complex in Onitsha, men and women relaxed and enjoyed themselves abundantly in singing and dancing either as individuals, groups or as masqueraders. In this connection Omedike Ibekwe was outstanding in his singing and dancing. Ibekwe like men of his age had a well-developed humorous side to his nature and he could on occasions give play, to his emotions with complete abandon, so much so that he became totally oblivious of things around him.

Omedike Ibekwe and late Ogbotobo were famous as (egwu ogazi) "guinea-fowl dancers." This type of dance involves a

tremendous physical strength. The body movements are extremely difficult and would probably kill the uninitiated. The whole anatomy of the performer appears to be in serious danger and it is a marvel that this internal machinery is not completely thrown out of gear. The practice of such dancing leads to a wonderful development of the back and abdominal muscles. Moreover the movements are free, there is nothing rigid about them, and they produce no sign of "physical exercise" stiffness. Every movement is clean, sure and decided showing absolute control of the muscles. For some of the dances Ibekwe and his group wear clusters of shells around one or both ankles and these are shaken simultaneously by all the members of the party. The precision with which this is done and the execution of the many intricate figures are marvellous to behold.

Ibekwe is fondly remembered today in Ayaka/Ajukwu masquerade dance in which he grips in each hand a carafe shaped calabash (awyaw) surrounded by flounces of cowrie shells and these are rattled with methodical vigour, producing a sound not unlike the backwash of waves on a shingly beach.

Another person hugs closely under his left arm a clay pot from ten to twelve inches in diameter. It has two holes, one at the top of the neck, the other in the side. To make music the performer beats sharply upon the mouth with the open palm of his right hand the left hand, meanwhile being passed backwards and forwards over the sidehole. The effect is very pleasant. It is a sort of mellow becoming sound which rises and falls as the side-hole is with three holes for fingering. These give highly pitched notes more like those of a piccolo. In addition, these are drums - small and great which are also capable of variation in note by pressure of the left hand over different parts of the surface.

Akukalia Udu Omedike Ibekwe was born in 1882 by Ibekwe Egwutu in Odojele Village Onitsha. Egwutu was son of Echah who was born by Izuorah son of Iseli who was

begotten by the great progenitor Odimegwugbueagu whose brother Odili was the ancestor of Umuasele. This close relationship between Odimegwugbueagu and Odili of Umuasele is responsible for the prohibition of marriage between the two families. Because Omedike's father Ibekwe did not beget a child in time he had to name Omedike Udumerie later abbreviated to Udu. The name Omeludike, he earned for his bravery and ease in overcoming obstacles.

As early as 1900 Akukalia Ibekwe was engaged as a warder under Prisons Department. He had a smattering knowledge of English and spent 2 years as a warder and in 1903 he was engaged on board a ship as a fireman. It was while working in the ship that he visited Ogulugwu and engaged his first wife Madam Ibe Nwonaku. When Akukalia's father died in 1904, he remarried his father's wife Enu and begot Peter Osita Ibekwe, Paul Onwudimegwu Ibekwe and Victoria Iwegbuna Ibekwe.

In 1908, Akukalia Ibekwe resigned his work on board a ship and became a road overseer with Public Works Department (PWD) and was posted to Awka. He was in-charge of the road from Onitsha to Ugwuoba, and from Awka to Ajalli. He had authority to engage road makers and labourers. He utilised this opportunity to employ Onitsha men like Okunwa Ogbotobo, Akunnia Mbanefo and Emegokwue.

In an era when prosperity was equated with the number of wives one had, Omedike had 15 wives viz; Madam Enu, Madam Ibe, Madam Uzoejinwa, Madam Ngboh, Madam Amaliwu, Madam Nwaku, Madam Mgbafor from Amansi, another Mgbafor from Nawfia and yet another Madam Mgbafor from Amaokala, Madam Udezue, Madam Ulunwa, Madam Ozobia, Madam Nwakanwa, Madam Nwando and Madam Nwamalubia. Like most Onitsha people he was initiated into the Agbalanze Society in 1924

when Udemba Gbosa was the okpala officiating for Umuodimegwugbuagu family.

He was transferred to Nnewi in 1926 and was in-charge of supervising the public road from Onitsha to Ihiala. At Nnewi he employed Nnabuenyi Iwegbu as a road-maker and Okunwa Ononye as a labourer in the clearing gang. He also employed Joel Okoli as a time-keeper. Omedike Ibekwe later left the PWD for the Police Force from where he retired.

It is, significant that two of Omedike's sons were both a law enforcement and law officers, Akukalia Mike Ibekwe is a retired Commissioner of Police and late Onwa Dan O. Ibekwe was a Justice of the Supreme Court and Federal Attorney-General.



H.R.H. JAMES OKOSI II

OBI OKOSI II 1889 — 1961

SINCE the death of Obi Anazonwu, subsequent successions to vacant stools had plunged Onitsha into a chronic state of sedition and discontent. Accession of Obi Okosi I was not peaceful and transition from father to son i.e. Obi Okosi I to Obi Okosi II was equally rough and tempestuous. It was therefore clear that for a considerable period, Onitsha people were unable to instal 'Obi' by customary and traditional process except through external aid. Commissioner Bedwell settled the Obishop dispute of 1900; Captain D.P.J. O'connor settled the one of 1931 — 35; and R.W. Harding settled the dispute of 1961 — 62. All these personalities were expatriate government agents.

The dispute of 1931 — 35 which involved Obi Okosi II erupted because of failure to implement Commissioner Bedwell's recommendations of 1900. In recognising Obi Okosi I in 1900, Commissioner Bedwell confirmed the inalienable right of Umudei kindred to the throne of Onitsha and to obviate further ambiguity in future, it was decided that Umudei kindred should from Obi Okosi I produce nine Obis consecutively in order to balance up the nine Obis which Umuezeoroli enjoyed from the reign of Ezearoli to Obi Anazonwu. thereafter, future Obis should alternate between Umudei and Umuezeoroli. Nothing can be clearer than this decision and yet when the time came in 1931 for its implementation fresh protests and agitations were fomented in order to set aside the decision to the detriment of the entire community. Umuezeoroli regarded Commissioner Bedwell's decision as fake and could not accept it as authoritative and binding on them. They resorted to the modified version of rotational Obishop between the two factions. On the other hand, Umudei kindred felt that the modified rotational Obishop was unfair to them

just after producing only one Obi instead of nine as previously recommended. Onitsha had been noted for brewing trouble always. It is either civil commotion or disastrous strife or it is not Onitsha. In this regard nothing can be more apt on this issue than Gbuvor Achike's 'Ode' — Onitsha my Home—quote:—

“Onitsha my home, my strife torn home, where truth and falsehood ceaselessly grapple, under the guise of institutionalised diplomacy, where the demise of one upheaval signals the birth of another. And recriminations and gossip thrive like mad” unquote.

Obi Okosi II was the cardinal figure in the 1931 — 35 dispute and the only candidate for Umudei. the stalemate that arose from the non-compromising attitude of the two warring factions resulted in a prolonged tug-of-war which lasted for four years.

The dramatis personae were as follows:— James Chukwude Okosi the son of the late Obi — from Umudei kindred. J.E. Egbunike, S.N. Nzegwu, B.N. Nzekwu, Felix Anazonwu and Obiozor Onya all from Umuezeoroli. The two last named were sons of Obi Anazonwu who had been nurturing grievance for the past thirty years without asserting themselves effectively. They only peeked the corn which others scattered and were therefore eliminated ab-initio as unsuitable candidates — leaving the four formidable Contestants. When it was certain that a new Obi could not emerge by natural and traditional process requests were directed from several quarters for government intervention. At first, the government reaction was to regard the dispute as purely internal affair which was absolutely within the competence of the Onitsha people to handle. Pressure for intervention however mounted

unabated and at last government had to yield to the importunity of the people. Captain D.P.J. Oconnor, the Ag. Resident of Onitsha Province was given this assignment. His role was that of a peace negotiator and there was no formal inquiry as such. For four years, Captain O'connor worked hard to bring the disruption to an end. It was an uphill task for he had to listen to stories about unfamiliar and intricate customs and tradition of people very advanced in the act of telling falsehoods.

Fluid, flexible and unwritten customs and traditions that shrank and expanded to suit the purposes of their narrators. For good four years, Captain O'connor was dribbled and found himself in a quagmire too difficult to come out with any reasonable and satisfactory solution to the problem. At one stage, he declared "It has been increasingly difficult to determine the precise customs — customs of all kinds — many in complete contradiction of each other have been urged by the rival parties. Tradition alleged by any one has been discounted and scorned by the others until eventually, the best that could be done was to accept what appeared to be the most rational tale"

The following factors were considered very relevant to the appointment and recognition of Obi (a) Conditions and qualifications for becoming Obi (b) The manner of selection of Obi (c) The customs and rituals concomittant with Obiship — and it was on all these factors that recognition of Obi should be based — but unfortunately numerous evidences in these regards were contradictory, so much so that no one single evidence tallied with the other. In the long run however, after all the synthesis and analysis of opinion polls of the cross section of the Onitsha populace have been taken into consideration it was obvious that James Chukwude Okosi had tilted the scale in his favor.

In the first place, the support of Umuezechima was necessary and at one of the crucial meetings, there were present most of the Ezechima of Onitsha and they were called to express an opinion. About 70 percent of them called for James Okosi. In the second place, the support of the Ndichie was also a very important factor and in this regard three of the Ndichie Ume adopted James Okosi unconditionally; nine of the Ndichie Okwa did likewise followed by four of the Ndichie Okwareze. In the third place, the acceptance by the multitude was also a vital part of the procedure which could not be slightly disregarded. Agbala-na-Iregwu and Ogbo-Isato who were dominant in this group admitted and confirmed that Okosi had properly performed the ceremonies of Udo after being accepted by four out of the five Ndichies entitled to do so. The other two candidates Egbunike and Nzegwu were debarred, the one owing to an abomination committed long ago by his family and the other because his mother was not an Onitsha woman. Umuezeoroli could not in the circumstance produce a single blameless candidate. Messrs Nzekwu and Nzegwu found themselves in a tangle and stated that they would withdraw if James Okosi was selected. Mr. Egbunike was equally in a lurch and said the same thing but insisted that the election must be made by the Ezechima and not by the Ndichie.

The stalemate was eventually broken "It was necessary that a Native Administration be established for Onitsha and it was very soon made evident that an Obi was essential to any scheme of reorganisation which would be evolved upon a basis of native custom and that so long as the office was unfilled, there would be no new system which was at all representative of such customs. Government was therefore obliged to intervene and His Excellency has decided that in order that the progress of Onitsha upon lines of reorganisation might no longer be deferred, to give not merely assistance but to name that

one to whom recognition as Obi will be accorded — the man was James Okosi."

The period 1932 — 35 known as 'Agha-Eze' was an important land mark in the history of Onitsha. It was a period of disunity and hostility among various rivaling groups - a period of cross-fires and counter-fires in which the contestants pitched their strengths against one another and all diabolical practices were unleashed as instruments of warfare. In 1934, when it was certain that James Okosi was gaining upper hand over his opponents, either by accident or coincidence, thunder and lightening struck his palace and this celestial artillery claimed three lives - lives of budding youths in the prime of life. Other casualties flung into the bush were rescued unconcious but later resuscitated to life. To the scientific and enlightened mind, the incident was mere act of God - but nonetheless tongues began to wag that the incident was the handwork of enemies and that the artillery missed the main target by narrow margin. Superstition was rife particularly among the contestants who were even afraid of their own shaddows and would regard any rival incident as a portent — a bad omen and even an enemy action. Little wonder then that an old man and a candidate in the 1931 — 35 Obishop contest was frightened by mere bicycle tyre marks on the ground in front of his house. Round and round he walked, swearing and cursing that he had already been warned in his dream about this danger the previous night and he quickly believed that an enemy had sent this juju to try his medicinal strength and if possible to harm and ruin him. This trivial incident made him to retreat to his house for the rest of the day and to cancel the very important engagement he had for that day - declaring among other things that to be forewarned is to be forearmed. The stalemate came to an end in November, 1935 when Obi Okosi was officially recognised as the Obi of Onitsha and he ascended the

throne of his father and his fore-fathers as the 16th Obi of Onitsha. Born in 1889, he belonged to Anidimma Age Grade. He was educated at St. Mary's School Onitsha Inland Town and on completion of his education he joined the Marine Department and in the course of time switched over to Administrative Service — where he gained considerable experience in administrative work. In the later twenties, he was transferred to Abeokuta Native Administration under the tutelage of his Highness, the Alake of Abeokuta, Sir Oladapo Ademola. He retired from the service in Northern Nigeria as a chief clerk immediately after the death of his father. In the 'Groundwork of the History and Culture of Onitsha' the Author described Obi Okosi II as follows:— quote.

“Stately built, James Okosi stood over six feet from the ground and commanded an awe — inspiring personality which made him every inch a king. He had a commanding tone, but his demeanour was gentle, dynamic and magnetic” unquote:

In agreeing with this appropriate description, it could be said that James Okosi was really born to be king. In nobility and all things royal, there can be no gainsaying the fact that James Okosi equated with monarchs of the civilized nations on the world:— The plantagenets — Stuarts and Tudors, Georges and Hanovers.

Opinions differ about the status of our Obis — whether they were absolute monarchs or constitutional monarchs with limited powers. Just like history — ancient and modern, the status of our Obis before the era of western civilization was essentially autocratic and their royal prerogatives were hardly challenged in those ancient times. They appointed Ndichies of all calibres in their own judgment after consultation with members of their own immediate family. The role of Ndichies generally was

advisory and the Obi were free to accept or reject such advice. Dark backwards in the legenday history of Onitsha certain democratic arrangements were once made to protect Obi and his royal family by requesting a group of people considered brave and strong enough to serve as security guards to the royal family. They were allowed to build their houses around the Obi's palace for this protective custody. It however transpired that these groups of people were versed in the art of transforming themselves into wild Buffaloes that menaced and preyed on the royal family they were supposed to guard and protect. The king realised the danger and drove the band waggon of the people far away into what was then known as bad bush, there to continue their nefarious and out-landish practices. The king did this unilaterally. By irony of fate however this punishment ultimately turned out to be blessing in disguise, for the fugitive offenders are now the landlords of the uninhabited bad bush constituting more than half of the land area of Onitsha. They are unchallenged bona fide owners of these property. In yet another legendary history, the Obi was solely responsible for declaring wars and to defend the territorial integrity of the Town. He rewarded the heroes and punished saboteurs. It happened on one occasion that a hero displayed an extraordinary gallantry in war and returned home with collections of decapitated heads as positive proof of his gallantry which in normal circumstances should earn him honour and reward. Quite on the contrary, and unfortunately for him the Obi identified one of the heads as that of his father-in-law. He was chagrined and ordered that the hero should be buried alive. The order was carried out and before the victim gave up the ghost, he turned his head westwards and cursed the land of his birth stating among other things that his people would never produce any hero again for generations upon generations. The curse came

true of course as manifested by the unimpressive and ugly looking personalities that now spring up from the accursed village up to the present day. Obi Okosi II became a Roman Catholic convert in 1900, the year he ascended the throne of Onitsha.

Autocracy of Obis at that time was manifest in father Lejunes' report dated, Onitsha November. 15, 1900. The report was addressed to the College of Propaganda Fide Roma Italia quote:--

“The big city of Onitsha is full of trees hundred of them, some very old, others planted the previous year. These were the trees on which human blood was smeared during the many occasions of human sacrifice. By giving to Father Vogler (his spiritual director) the piece of wood (wand of authority) which he held in his hand while judging and condemning the victims destined for sacrifice he indicated that human sacrifice would never again be performed in the future”. unquote.

These stories thus catalogued carried some measure of conviction that obishop in those ancient times was essentially autocratic and even carried the power of death and life. However with the impact of modern democracy coupled with excrecences of western civilization, Obis powers had been considerably reduced and by process of evolution had yielded place to the present constitutional monarchy-which now left them with residual powers only. In spite of their active resistance to change they could no longer regain the status quo. After all when Obi Chimaevi made his son Chimukwa Onowu Iyasele, there was no hue and cry about it. He was merely exercising royal prerogative. When Chimukwa as Onowu Iyasele assisted to instal his brother Aroli, the Obi of Onitsha there was no protest against balancing kindred representation or equitable spread of Obi's cabinet between the ruling and the non-

ruling classes. However in 1911, things began to fall apart and when Obi Okosi I probably influenced by the above quoted precedents made his brother Gbasiuzo Okosi, Onowu Iyasele, heavens were let loose. Liars of course have no retentive memory and so the precedents were easily forgotten and opponents descended on Obi Okosi I like tons of bricks. His action was described as high-handedness, unpardonable nepotism and a travesty of tradition.

And even convinced that the so called residual powers still confer on him the appointment of Ndichies in his own judgement after routine consultation with members of his immediate family Obi Okosi II repeated his royal prerogative and appointed Isaac Obinwe of Umudei kindred 'Onowu Iyasele' when his uncle Gbasiuzo Okosi died in 1944. Constitutional issues of all dimensions were again raised to discredit the Obi. The generality of Onitsha populace friends as well as foes combined forces and attacked this event as the worst political blunder ever experienced in the history of Onitsha. Ostensibly all the steps taken by the various Obis were part of royal prerogatives and partly motivated by self preservation which was more important to them at the time than democratic principles. Perhaps the only mitigating factor in favour of the critics lay in the fact that 'Vox Dei' as represented by the Obis did not confirm closely to 'Vox populi' as represented by the subjects, otherwise, one can hardly appreciate why the normal exercise of royal prerogative could have evoked such bitter recrimination and regarded as mortal sin beyond pardon.

By Akunne A.A. Bosah



THE LATE THE HON. P.H. OKOLO, M.B.E., M.H.R.
Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice

THE late the Hon. P.H. Okolo, M.B.E. M.H.R., Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice by popular acclaim "English Made Easy", who lived from 1896—1959 rose from a humble and simple start to achieve not only a modest but an unquestionably excellent finish.

That he lived a life of example in the service of God and humanity is creditably borne out by the scores implicit in some of the major achievements exhibited by the record of his life events.

Teacher and Educationist:

The late Hon. P.H. Okolo began his career as a pupil teacher from 1911—1913 during which he served at Umuoji and environs. Towards the later part of 1913 he had distinguished himself sufficiently to merit selection as one of the scholars who were picked to form the foundation students of the famous Igbariam Teachers' Training College, from which he graduated with the Teachers' Grade II Certificate in 1915. And still later in 1925 he acquired the Senior Teachers' Certificate, a rare feat in those days, not so much for the prestige that went with that status, but principally with a view to further equip himself adequately for the distinguished role he was to play in the country's educational scene.

From 1916—1923 he was the Headmaster of Schools in Aguleri and the old Anambra Division, then from 1924—1929 he served as Headmaster to various schools in Adazi, Isuofia, Ajalli; Arondizuogu, Ekwulobia, Agulu, Nanka, Achina, Oraukwu, Alor, Nnewi and Nimo.

In 1930 he was transferred to Onitsha to fill the post of Headmaster at St. Mary's School until 1934 when he was appointed Senior Tutor at St. Charles Teachers' Training College, Onitsha.

Between 1940 and 1949 this humble servant of the Lord served as Headmaster of the Holy Trinity School, Onitsha, at the end of the latter year he was rewarded with a service course in Local Government in the United Kingdom, as a result of the effective role he had played in the local administration of Onitsha Town.

In 1950 he was decorated with the award of Member of the Most Distinguished "Order of the British Empire" by the late King George VI in recognition of his services to humanity, both in his role as educationist and in his very active role in other spheres in the society. In the same year, he became the first indigenous Education Secretary for Onitsha Catholic Education House in which capacity he supervised and managed all Catholic primary schools within the Onitsha Archdiocese until his death in 1959.

Lay Apostolate Life:

His role as teacher and educationist was closely interwoven with an active lay apostolate life. He served as an auxiliary to the early missionaries in the task of spreading the word of God throughout the length and breadth of Igbo land, working with such able colleagues of blessed memory as Mr. William Onuchukwu, Mr. Ndaguba, Mr. Anakwe, Chief Magistrate Odogwu, Mr. E. Oguchi, Mr. Achebe among many others. As chief foundation member of the congregation of the Knights of Saint Mulumba in Nigeria, that formidable organ of Catholic action, he walked throughout his life in the path way of the brightness of light shown by great missionaries of the time, such as Bishop Shanahan, Fr. Jordan, Fr. Lutz, Fr. Graetz, Fr. O'Donoghue, Fr. Wolfe, Monsignor Obelagu, Fr. Tansi, Bishop Anyogu and of course, His Grace, the Late Archbishop Charles Heerey of Onitsha. His contributions earned him the award of Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice from the Roman Pontif in 1952.

Councillor, Judge and Community Leader:

Despite the late P.H. Okolo's adherence to the Catholic Faith he was able to retain an equally deep understanding of the ideals of the customs and life pattern of his heritage.

All through his life he was an avid custodian of Onitsha culture and contributed in a very significant **measure** to the social progress of his home town and environs. He was the Federal President of the Onitsha Improvement Union an eloquent testimony of the confidence reposed in him as leader and custodian of cultural values and as an acknowledged authority in Onitsha history and culture, he contributed substantially to Igbo literature, being the author of "Onitsha Ebo Itenani" and editor of the text "Akwukwo Ogugu, Igbo Kwuo" among his other contributions.

In public life he was Secretary to the Onitsha Town Native Authority, later renamed Onitsha Town Council from 1938—1952. It is on record that the modernisation of the Onitsha Main Market owes its existence to the initiative and enterprising spirit of the then Onitsha **Town Council** manned by such illustrious sons of Onitsha as the late P.H. Okolo, the late Chief M.O. Ibeziako, Chief Isaac Mbanefo, the present Odu of Onitsha, the late Peter Achukwu, and Mr. J.C. Oranye to mention a few.

Around the forties he was one of the Native Court Judges of the then Onitsha Native Court and even after he had relinquished that Office, continued to serve for many years as member of the Onitsha Urban County Council.

In 1954 when representative parliamentary government was first introduced in the country, the late

Hon. P.H. Okolo's candidature, as the representative for Onitsha in the Federal House of Representative won general acclaim.

The last few years of his life were spent as a member of the Nigerian Federal Parliament at which forum he endeavoured to influence thoughts and principles of government from the top while continuing this as Teacher and Educationist.

He died on the 26th of January 1959 leaving behind him an enviable record of a life trail of humility and piety for which his family will forever remain grateful to the Good Lord.



THE ARCHDEACON V. NWORAH UMUNNA

THE ARCHDEACON V. NWORAH UMUNNA

The Venerable V. Nworah Umunna was born in 1899 at Ogboli Olosi Village, Umualibo Family. His Father's name was Ogbuefi Akukalia Umunna, the son of Chief Adazia. His Mother's name was Madam Onyekponu Mozie, from Chief Mozie of Umudei Ifejiofor Family. He had one brother but dead, and one sister named Oliaku Ezim Ochei. He was elder to the brother, but junior to the sister who was the first daughter of their Father. He was a member of Iganiru Age Grade of Onitsha. He started school when he was young and was a chorister at an early age under the late Benjamin Emenike Nsenu. His uncle, late Mr. Obi was a married christian, so, Nwora followed him to church for he lost his parents at an early age. Later he went to Asaba to live with his Aunt, Mrs. Monu and then attended the Government School, Asaba. Later on, he lived with the Rev. Spencer at Obosi. Rev. Spencer played a great part in his upbringing for he lived with him as a houseboy. He passed standard six at the Government School, Asaba. He began his services as a school teacher about 1909 to 1910 at Christ Church School Onitsha under Ekwulugo. He passed higher classes and was sent for training at Awka College. He taught as an Assistant Teacher, when Mrs. Braket was the Supervisor of Schools in 1912. His contemporaries were Rev. Onyelobi of Ogidi and Mr. Joseph Agusiobo of services of U.A.C. at Zaria as Accountant. After some years he resigned again from the U.A.C. to answer the call from above to Holy Order. He then was admitted into Awka College on a Salary of 12/6 as a Senior Catechist.

In 1925 he was made a Deacon and was posted to Owerri District under the late Rev. A.C. Onyeabo, who was later consecrated an Assistant Bishop. As a Catechist, he was at Christ Church, Owerri from 1923/24. As a deacon he was posted to St. Mathew's Church, Ata in 1926. As a priest he was at Ife Church in Ezinihite area of Owerri. He served at Awka District as Superintendent from 1932 to 1937 from where he was sent Overseas where he obtained D.Th in St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, England. He was at Christ Church Onitsha as the superintendent from 1938 to 1945.

He was appointed the Archdeacon of Owerri Archdeaconry by the Most Rev. C.J. Patterson D.D. who was the Archbishop of the Province of West Africa in 1945. He was consecrated and installed in 1946. During his tenure of office as the Archdeacon of Owerri, he proposed and master-minded the building of All Saints' Cathedral, Egbu. It was his brainchild.

He made Egbu Owerri the Education Headquarters and appointed General Manager to monitor the affairs of the Schools and Teachers in the Archdeaconry.

In 1946 he went to Owerri as the first Archdeacon of Owerri. He played major parts at the above mentioned places.

In Owerri Districts he opened many schools, vocational classes and homes for women hostel for the training of women in home economics, sewing and domestic affairs. In Awka District he opened many stations, schools and churches in places like Nawgu Ugwuogba, Ukwulu, Igboariam, Achalla areas etc. etc.

In Onitsha District he created St. John's Fegge, St. Andrew's, St. Christopher, R.A.M. School, Onitsha Girls' Secondary School, Oko Ogbele and many churches and schools in Aguleri, Anam Inoma and Omor areas. His attitude towards adapting native laws and customs to christianity was "Render unto Ceasar things that belong to Ceasar and render to God, things that belong to God."

He was highly respected by the White Missionaries for he was out spoken and not afraid to speak where there were faults and especially where those who were lower were under-rated. Examples could be found on:—

- (a) Wages of church workers.
- (b) The building and equipment of parsonages
- (c) Encouragement and scholarship of clergy men overseas.
- (d) He was the first man to propose the building of the present Cathedral and the first one to levy and collect the fund.

He believed in the education of women, hence he built Vocational Centres and Homes to help women. He also separated many mixed schools to have Girls' schools separately.

His contemporaries were Bishop Bara Hart, Bishop Dimiari, Rev. Spiff etc.

His means of transport then were bicycle and trekking on foot supported with stick, but later he owned a car while in Owerri.

His relationships with the Roman Catholic clergymen were then of very high rivalry, but he had a way of bringing people round to realise the truth. He succeeded in getting the members of the Anglican and Roman Catholic to form one committee for common purpose.

His first wife was Elizabeth Diogo Akpom of Ogbeobi in Umuezearli quarters Onitsha. She was the daughter of late T.B. Akpom a church worker, so they met in mutual ground. She was educated. She died in August 1933. She had four children, a boy and three girls. The boy was educated at Fourah Boys' College Sierra Leone but died before his father in 1944. The two senior girls were teachers before they were married and the last one was trained in Germany as a Nursing Sister.

His second wife Margaret Chineze Nsenu was the last daughter of late Benjamin Emenike Nsenu, a Catechist. She had a Higher Elementary Teachers' Certificate and was trained at St. Monica's College Ogbunike. They had five children. Two boys and three girls. The first boy died in 1979. The second boy was trained in Nebraska University in America and got his doctorate degree. He is now a Professor at one of the Universities in Nigeria. The three girls are graduates. The eldest is trained in Computer Science in a London University. The second one trained in Ahmadu Bello University as a librarian while the youngest trained in U.N.N., Enugu Campus as an Accountant.

God in his mercy fulfilled his closest desire for his children.

His wives played great parts in helping him with his missionary work for it is a well known saying that "Behind a great man there is always a woman".

Archdeacon Nwora Umunna died in August 4, 1948 at Iyienu Hospital. His children are all married. He died at the age of 54.

He was the brain behind the establishment of the Society for the Promotion of Ibo language and culture which spearheaded the introduction of duo accents in Ibo language.

He was the first indigenous Priest to move a motion for the building of Cathedral in the Diocesan Board, about the year 1940, which later materialised in 1952, when the Foundation Stone was laid by the Governor-General of Nigeria, His Excellency Sir John Macpherson. He was the man who initiated that churches in the Niger Diocese should start off the cathedral building.

He was once the Chairman of the Confederation of the Onitsha Improvement Union, Onitsha. In the nineteen forties, as the Superintendent of Christ Church District Onitsha, he initiated the move and stood strongly by it on the pulpit, that female sexes should not be circumcised in the whole of the then Eastern Nigeria. He backed himself with the knowledge of the scriptures and Onitsha custom.

It received nation wide reaction. Later, he moved it as a motion in the meeting of the old Niger Diocesan Board and it was passed into Law. To-day, it is a great joy to christian community in Ibo land.

He was the Chairman of the Onitsha Progressive Union, a christian organisation, which embraced only the indigenous people of Onitsha from 1932 to 1942.

He was the Priest who negotiated for the vast area of land where the Central School, Onitsha and St. Andrew's Church, Odoakpu Onitsha situate and succeeded in obtaining the area for the Anglican Mission.

He transferred the former Onitsha Central School which was formerly at the Dennis Memorial Grammar School to its present site at Odoakpu, Onitsha.

He negotiated also the vast area of land where St. John's Church Fegge, Onitsha, situates.

He found and negotiated for the land where the Rev. Anyaegbunam Memorial Primary School and

Archdeacon Nwora Umunna Memorial Primary School, Onitsha, situate.

He was an intellectual to be reckoned with among his comrades. His wisdom and personality earned him a high reputation. His pieces of advice when Onitsha people gathered together at Ime Obi, in the presence of the Obi of Onitsha, the Ndichie Ume and other chiefs, were usually heralded and implemented.

He was highly respected by Onitsha people and his memorial would be difficult to forget. He was a good preacher, good adviser, a philanthropist, a disciplinarian and a patriot. His fellow clergymen recognised him as their spokesman and defender.

In a memorial service held in his honour by the clergymen at Otolu Nnewi, the Ven. Dr. B.C.E. Nwosu, in his sermon said, "we have lost our spokesman, a fearless man, truthful and a man of integrity".

By and large, he marched on the sands of time, for he never violated the sanctity of his oath as a Minister of God.

Before his death, he devoted his time as a hobby in producing many manuscripts on the coming of the early missionaries which would have been very useful for posterity but unfortunately all got lost and could not be traced. During his lecture at Emmanuel School classroom in 1945, under the auspices of the erstwhile Onitsha Youths Literary Circle he compared Onitsha tradition with that of the Hebrews with Biblical references such as the following.

ONITSHA TRADITION COMPARED WITH THOSE OF THE ISRAELITES AND THE LINEAGE RELATIVE FACTS

- | | Biblical References |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Circumcision of males after eight days | Gen. 17 v 12 &
Lev. 12 v 3 |

2. Marrying Virgin Girls	Isaiah 62 v 5
3. Idol Worship	Number 25 v 2
4. Obeisance to the King (Obi)	2 Sam. 15 v 5
5. Calling on ancestral fathers	Exodus 4 v 5
6. Ceremonial confinement after menstruation to Ozo Titled Man	Lev. 15 v 19
7. Establishment of Images (gods)	Gen. 31 v 30
8. Covenant pact (Igba Ndu)	Gen. 31 v 44
9. Man to marry his brother's widow	Deut. 25 v 5
10. First daughter to be given in marriage first before others.	Gen. 29 v 26
11. Sprinkling blood on the alter	Lev. 16 v 15
12. Initiation to Priesthood	Lev. 16 v 32
13. Cleansing of oneself before embacking on ceremonial service/worship.	2 Cor. 7 v 1
14. Purification of Priest (Onye isi alusi) before performing ceremonial rites.	Exodus 19 v 15
15. Enticing a maid by a man (Itubo Ime)	Exodus 22 vv. 16 — 21 16 — 23
16. Harvest Festival (Iwaji)	Exodus 23 v 16

N.B. Due to the prevailing circumstances and advancement consequent to the present age of technology, most of these facts have become absolute. They were sacrosanct to our fore-fathers and even my own father.

He left behind his indefatigable wife who sustained the family and made it worth the candle.

His life as a Minister of God was a monument of history.

He served the Anglican Mission for 28 years.

BY J.O. ONYEJEKWE



**THE RIGHT REV.
BISHOP JOHN CROSS ANYOGU**

BISHOP JOHN CROSS NWABUNWANNE ANYOGU

THE annals of the Church's history in Nigeria cannot be complete without one name that rose early to eminence and leadership in the country - that of Bishop J.C. Anyogu.

Born on 11 March, 1898 to the family of Mr. Jacob Oradiwe Anyogu and Mrs. Anna Fatima Anyogu of Onitsha, little did his parents know that little John was destined to be first Catholic priest of the Niger and later a beloved shepherd.

His parents were formerly Anglicans. They lived for some time after marriage without any offspring. Jacob later made friends with the early missionaries who always fed him with sound Catholic doctrines each time they spent together. Convinced of the Catholic doctrines more than any other, he decided to turn Catholic. Having been formerly received into the Catholic church, the couple radically turned a new leaf in their life. And with it came a new blessing — Fatima conceived of a male child, John. This for them was no less a miracle. It strengthened their faith in Catholicism all the more. After John came, many other brothers and sisters: Luke, Marcine, Andrew, Charles, Jacob, Maria (today Rev. Mother Bernadette, IHM) Joseph, Veronica, Appolonia and Francis.

Little John started school in 1902, the year Fr. Lejeune's co-worker, Joseph Shanahan arrived Onitsha in November. Holy Trinity School, Onitsha (now Obi Anazonwu Memorial) had John Cross as one of its pioneer pupils. Renowned educators like Br. Otheran and Br. Healy were his teachers, In 1911, John passed out of primary school.

In 1912, at the age of 14, John also passed the Nigerian Clerical Entrance Examination (Junior Civil Service Entrance Examination). This speaks well of him as a hard-working student, for it was rather extraordinary to have made it so well and so young.

John's calling to the priesthood seemed in-born. It was on 1st January, 1912 that he at last summoned up the courage to inform his father about his burning desire for the priestly life. His father Jacob took it without a tinge of seriousness. However, at the persistence of his worried son, he faced the matter more squarely convinced that his son was not just being infantile when he wrote: "My dear father, as my New Year resolution, I want to serve God all my life. I want to be a priest.

But one other question stared this excited Father on the face: Can a black man become priest? He then took John to Joseph Shanahan who after a smile of surprise promised him a favourable answer in due course.

Having completed arrangements for the beginning of the priestly training of this first Nigerian east of the Niger to want to be Catholic priest so seriously, John was sent in 1913 to St. Mary's Castlehead, Grande-O-Sands, Lancheshire, England. He was accompanied by his brother Luke.

In 1919 John graduated from Lancheshire Institute and also passed the Dublin Matriculation. The two brothers returned to Nigeria that same year. Luke became headmaster of Holy Trinity School while John was a teacher.

There were at this time efforts to begin a Junior Seminary in Onitsha with people like Nwanegbo, Obelagu, Tansi and Simon Okoye — all of whom later succeeded as priests except the last mentioned who rather became Brother Michael Okoye. In 1924, these

young prospective priests were moved to Igbariam to start the new Seminary which was also to serve as teacher training college there.

John was posted to Ogoja on apostolic work in 1921 where Frs. James Mellette and Douvry were performing their ministry. He had to trek his way since there was no available means of transport for him to take. Similar hardships came his way and it is believed today that these were deliberate tests which were part of his training.

Having weathered the storm all those years in search of the priestly crown, John Cross was ordained on December 8, 1930, by the then Bishop of Onitsha, Joseph Shanahan. That was 45 years after the pioneer Catholic Missionaries led by Fr. Joseph Lutz landed in the Onitsha wharf in 1885.

Fr. John, as many testify, was a man of steel; hard-working, patient and forbearing. People in the Idah area of Benue State with whom he worked, have not ceased to sing his praises. It is said that he did most of his grassroot apostolate on foot. He also worked in Nnewi, Adazi and briefly in Dunukofia as parish priest.

Fr. John Cross later became monsignor, auxiliary bishop in 1957 and finally the first Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Enugu in 1962. By this, he not only was the first priest East of the Niger, but also the first Catholic Igbo bishop.

1961 saw Bishop Anyogu with dignitaries like Chief Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (now the Owelle of Onitsha), Professor William Hansberry, Dr. Michael Okpara (d. 1984), Sir Eric Ashby, Dr. J.J. Nwannah, Sir J.W. Cook, awarded honorary degrees of the first indigenous university to achieve autonomy in Nigeria the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He was awarded Dr. Litt., Honoris Cause.

He exhibited a great love of mercy, humility and peace. Reconciliation of strife-torn families and friends is counted as one of his major areas of concentration as priest and later bishop. In his family he was a symbol of unity and the leading opinion, for he was highly respected because of his firmness at maintaining peace and justice. Asked about their relationship with their brother, Bishop John Cross, the family members affirm: "He stood for the truth always, was very disciplined and wanted everybody to be so, but he was in spite of all that very approachable."

Just as the Nigerian civil war was on the verge of breaking out the Bishop died in the Borromeo Hospital, Onitsha after a brief illness. He was consequently interned at his See - the Holy Ghost Cathedral, Enugu.

Bishop Anyogu's hobbies included football, tennis, chess and music.



CHIEF P.O. ANATOGU

CHIEF P.O. ANATOGU

WHEN Mr. N.U. Akpan the erstwhile Chief Secretary to the Eastern Nigerian Government, wrote in his preface to the Harding Commission of Inquiry to the Obishop dispute in Onitsha in 1962, that "Onitsha without an Obi is like something without a head", he might have added that the Obi of Onitsha without an Onowu, is like a thing with a head but without a leg to stand upon. Such is the importance of the Onowu who has vital traditional functions to perform when a new Obi is to be crowned. Even after the Obi's coronation, the king's cabinet is incomplete without the Onowu, who is the head of all the Ndichies or Red Cap Chiefs. The first six chiefs, known as Ndichie Ume which constitutes the Obi's cabinet is led by the Onowu Iyasele. In the absence of the Obi of Onitsha for whatever reasons, the Onowu deputises. If there is an interregnum before a new Obi is appointed, it is the Onowu that officiates in all intents and purposes as the Obi.

It is in the context of the above that one can appreciate the high office and responsibility of the incumbent Onowu, Chief Philip Okonkwo Anatogu born in 1898 of the Ogbo Family of Umuasele village of which he is the Diokpa today. He was born by Anatogu Nwabunie son of Omekam Obieja son of Semia, son of Ogbo. Chief Anatogu's mother, as Okwuonicha Chude of Ogbeabu Village Onitsha. His mother died early so he had to be kept at Ogbeabu Village by his grandmother until he was married and came over to Umuasele to live.

Chief Anatogu attended St. Mary's School Onitsha and was trained by such historical teachers like Father (later Bishop) Shanahan and Father L.J. Ward. He taught for two years 1915—17 at Awoidemili. He later worked for the then Bank of British West Africa (BBWA) now First Bank Nig. Ltd. for 34 years. He took his Ozo title early in life and has been the Onowu of Onitsha for 32 years.

A few crises have tried to tear Onitsha apart since Chief Anatogu has been the Onowu Iyasele of Onitsha. These include, the Obishop dispute of 1962 in which the Onowu supported his inlaw Nnanyelugo J.J. Enwezor, the Onitsha Market dispute in which the Main Market stalls were reallocated by the Asika Administration the partisan role played by the Onowu and some Red Cap Chiefs including the Agbala-na-Iregwu, did not go down well with the Owelle of Onitsha Dr. Azikiwe, who in his appeal to the leaders and people of Onitsha to forgive and forget the wrongs committed during the market crises, said inter alia "The Ndichie endorsed double standard in enforcing the ban on those who had successfully applied for market stalls. Then, they condoned discrimination in dispensing justice."

Despite the trials of public office which tries life as by fire, Chief Anatogu, one of the tallest men in Onitsha is very popular both as an individual and as the leader of Onitsha's traditional red cap chiefs. His agility and dancing prowess especially on traditional occasions like ofala, is better watched than described. Most people in Onitsha go to places when the occasion would arise for the Onowu to display his artistic and ever impressive dancing performance.

As head of Ogbo Family he will be long remembered as a pioneer settler in what is now known as Woliwo or Ogbo Family Layout. He was the first to have the courage in the early thirties to live in his present site at Woliwo before C.K.C.; Q.R.C. and the many houses were ever built. He defied and dealt a deadly blow on night marauders who threatened the peace of that vicinity.

The Ogbo Family owes to Chief Anatogu a debt of gratitude for leading the physical and legal battle that resulted in the Family acquiring a vast territory now belonging to the Ogbo Family. The Onowu rues the day Government took away Fegge land from his family whom he claimed were the original owners.

It is to Chief Anatogu's lasting credit that he has shepherded members of Ogbo family and ensured its solidarity. Today the members are happy and prosperous, thanks to the equitable share of the family property to all its members. Even their daughters occasionally receive a token largess from the proceeds of the vast family land. All this speaks volumes for Chief anatogu's wisdom, fair mindedness and good leadership qualities.

Chief Anatogu unlike traditional chiefs now a widower was only married to one wife.

Two of the Chief's sons worked for the banking industry like their old man before them.



CHIEF I.A. MBANEFO MBE
The Odu of Onitsha

CHIEF I.A. MBANEFO —MBE THE ODU OF ONITSHA

HIS family easily ranks among the most famous in Igboland. Many members of his family are steeped in great learning, in diverse fields: from law to engineering, to architecture, to business, to priesthood, medicine and accountancy. Yet, on a visit to Chief Isaac Anieka Mbanefo, the Odu II of Onitsha at his family home in Onitsha, the first thing that strikes you is not likely to be the family's fame, but the incredible physique of Pa Mbanefo who at 88 in 1987 exhibits no symptoms of old age: frail physique, wrinkles, wizened face no brittle white hairs that betray symptoms of unhealthy follicles. In fact, he strikes you strongly as a man two decades below his age.

His rich baritone voice was reverberating through the dawn air as he responds to greetings and answers to many phone-calls. He exhibits agility in his movements as he struts in and out of the inner rooms to bring books and relevant papers.

His medium sized parlour is conservatively furnished with simple furniture which still betrays some aristocratic touch. In his strikingly clean compound is a sort of miniancestral shrine exhibiting some life-sized portrait of Pa Mbanefo, done in water colours, with these are assorted animal skin mats easily made inconspicuous by a large spotted tiger skin perhaps depicting the family's past military valour.

Chief Mbanefo presents a picture of an extra-ordinary man of strength character and wisdom which takes a distinct hue in the mind as one reads a eulogy scripted on a carved out portrait presented to him by his children

on the eve of his previous birthday. The eulogy says much about him. "Never in the history of anyone family was so much owed by every member to one man. Your wisdom is our guiding principle and the jealousy of many. You have always taught us that the solution is not to share out any misery but to take action to cure it and, that it is better to lose a battle than to lose the source of the family's success in life. May God grant you more life that you may continue to show us the light thread safely into the unknown".

What is the secret of his remarkable good health at 88, he was asked. His face brightens and his responses comes in genial tone, "There is no special secret for good health, I will rather attribute it to nature. It all depends on how one comforts himself, the type of food you eat and the quantity you take; the type of drinks you take and the functions you exercise your body in." So what are the types of food and drinks the Odu takes? "I have no special diet, except that I take more of our traditional food than the imported or modern food. I make sure I take cold baths because I noticed it was what my father took all his life. And he lived long. My mother lived even longer."

In the Africa's Who's Who, Odu's hobbies are listed as football, tennis and house building. Does the Odu still exercise in these sports? A small frown crept onto his face again. "What will you say if you were to come here and see me playing tennis or football?" he asks. "I will consider it strange" the reporter mumbled defensively. "Well, I don't indulge in strange things at my age!" he reports. The message is clear. You don't take him for granted. His response is elaborate and profound, displaying remarkable memory, when the question is about his family background, his journey through life, his concept of education, politics, religion.

culture, corruption and values. And the peculiar slant of some of his wisdom of the past.

Pa Mbanefo was born on July 1, 1898 in Onitsha to a relatively elitist family of Mr. and Mrs. Mbanefo. His father worked with the old Niger Company while his mother was a big trader affiliated to the big trading companies in those days. The young Mbanefo had his early primary education at the Anglican Emmanuel Elementary School, Onitsha from 1906 to 1910 and then switched over to Government Elementary School, Onitsha where he schooled from 1910—1913. After a one year stint at Udi Government School, Enugu, the young Mbanefo whose baptismal name is Isaac, spurned opportunities of working in the government service, and got apprenticed to one Mr. Barnes, to learn book-keeping "at little or no salary." He later changed to another master, Mr. S.A. Winfield, a Chief Book-keeper with the Christian and Company who trained him at what was then considered a whooping sum of £20.

He later joined Christian and Company as a book keeper. On the retirement of his master, Mbanefo took over from him. In 1928, Christian and Company was absorbed by UAC, making Mbanefo automatic staff of UAC. From 1945 to 1955, he served as a manager in UAC and a director of the Nigeria Coal Corporation from 1954 to 1956. On retirement from UAC in 1955, Pa Mbanefo became a produce buying agent of the UAC. for most part of the Eastern Region. He was awarded Member of the British Empire (MBE) in 1954.

Although he was educated in a christian missionary school and had remained a strong member of the Anglican Church hierarchy in Onitsha ever since, he did not hesitate to initiate himself into the prestigious Agbalanze Ozo Society in 1920, the year he first married. Today, he is both the oldest member and oldest

initiate of the Society. "I am a religious man by nature, both traditional and Christian", he told the Sunday Concord. But how does he reconcile the two forms of worship. "There is nothing to reconcile because the two forms are one", he points out, adding: "I go to church on Sundays and at home I perform the traditional rites. The two forms are not opposed to each other. The worship of God is universal All countries know or have their own method of worshipping God. Christianity is part of Jewish worship. We have our own form of worship, before Christianity came to this part of the world. All forms of worship, whether in Christianity, Islam, African traditional religion, depended on two things, truth and love. Anything outside speaking the truth and loving your neighbour is not religion," he said.

Pa Mbanefo believes that traditional forms of worship in Africa emphasises these virtues more than perhaps other religions "People easily abide by these tenets because they know that to do otherwise it will bring them instant punishment from the offended God. This is not the case in many other religions." Going to church, he explained, is to hear the sermons, compare and contrast the teachings of the church with tenets of traditional worship and then distill the truth to enhance knowledge.

Because of his universalist concept of religion, Pa Mbanefo is not happy at the spate of religious strifes in the country. "There is absolutely no need for religious controversies. Everybody should be allowed to worship God in his own way," he counselled, refusing to be drawn into commenting on the OIC disputes. "I don't have the background to it," he said evasively and then switched to a topic that seemed uppermost in his mind, education.

His grouse with our concept of education and government's emphasis on compulsory education is multifaceted. First, Chief Mbanefo contends that our concept of education needs a redefinition. "We attach more importance to paper qualifications and then the worst is that we think education is merely the ability to speak English Language very well. So, a man who cannot speak English language well is not educated. We scorn him and call him illiterate. That is the first mistake we make," he explained.

He cited the instance of students who did well in science subjects but were denied good certificate and even university admission because they did not pass English language. "Is it not foolishness to fail him?"

Is he advocating functional education? The old man shook his head, clearly unimpressed by that cliché. "Education is in-born", he explains. To start with, you must be a man who speaks the truth. Education without moral value is no education. If you are educated and you are a thief, your education doesn't count anymore. This second grouse is what he described as the government's undue emphasis on compulsory education for all. "Education should not be free; the government should not force people to be educated. The trouble we are having right now is that the little money the government has is put on education just so that everybody would be educated", he said.

He thinks that the government has no business running schools and universities insisting on compulsory education for everybody. Said he, "Education is a commercial business, the government should not run schools. The government should close all

its schools and allow voluntary agencies and private businessmen to take over. The mission of any group of people can team together as people buy shares in companies and raise money to run schools." The government, he said, should only regulate standards and examinations. Pa Mbanefo is unimpressed by a suggestion that such privatisation may raise the cost of education above the reach of the average families, who are already reeling under the impact of high cost of education in the country.

The octogenarian thinks that such complaints arise because people were literally forced to go to school even those who would have been better off without education.

"Everybody should not be educated. There must be class distinction if the society is to go forward. The danger of mass education is that anybody with paper qualifications counts himself equal with everyone else including those who should naturally be his superiors in life. The real issue is that in making education compulsory, you are forcing an unwilling horse to the stream just because you want to eradicate illiteracy. and what do you call illiteracy?

"The type of education people get now doesn't help the country. Right now, all children go to school and can hardly join you in farm for food production." So much premium has, over the years, been placed on formal education to the extent that people have erroneously come to accept education replete with all the abstract theoretical jargons absorbed in schools, as an end in itself, not as a means of shaping people to a productive end."

"The result? A youngman goes to school or university and comes back with inflated notion that he is going to become somebody. He is too important to go through the normal apprenticeship of life. He wants to start life from the top without climbing the lower rungs of the ladder of life. When he doesn't get that, he feels cheated and deprived by society and then starts formulating trouble against constituted authorities," he said.

The solution for this complex problem, he advocates, is for people to return to traditional settings where they inherit their father's occupation. Said he: "we must bring down our values, let people go back to their own hamlet and start to live the way our fathers lived before. From there we develop gradually. For instance, if you are a barber, one or some of your children should learn how to barb and live by it. But if you send all your children to school, who will barb your hair?"

He also expressed concern over the plight of the aged in the society. The essence of having children, he maintained, is to let them help you in your old age. But with almost everybody at school, he lamented, the aged are neglected left at the mercies of fate as they crawl about in extreme pain to meet their domestic needs in the absence of youths to help.

Cautiously, the old man is brought back to the dispute brewing between him and the Obi of Onitsha which had led to the latter suspending him from the town's council of chiefs. It was a dispute on everyone's lip which was made more dramatic by the announcement of the Odu's suspension on the state's electronic media. Chief Mbanefo who is still fondly addressed as "Odu" by all, darts a reproachful glance at the reporter and chuckles: "It is not matter for the press leave it out" The order is peremptory and final.

Pa Mbanefo, a polygamist who has 20 children can look back with satisfaction on the prosperity of his children in various fields. There is Samuel Mbanefo, a medical doctor, Mr. Frank Mbanefo, an architect, in private practice and Mr. Arthur Mbanefo an Accountant who is also the Pro-Chancellor of the University of Lagos. There are many others in other fields - engineering, law, priesthood, businessman, etc. But for Pa Mbanefo, Nigeria would, perhaps have been denied the benefit of the services of one of the greatest legal luminary Sir Louis Mbanefo former Chief Justice of Eastern Nigeria who was Pa Mbanefo's younger brother. "I sent him to England to read Law in 1932, recalls Pa Mbanefo. "His death in 1978 was the saddest moment in my life," he said.

BY DIMGBA IGWE

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LATE KPAJIE J.M. ONYECHI MBC

LATE KPAJIE J.M. ONYECHE (MBE)

ONITSHA indigenes have a long history of public service. The result is that most people of this generation can look back to fathers, and grand fathers who were public servants. Such an Onitsha man who among others laid the foundation of and distinguished himself in the civil service of this state was the late Kpajie Jacob Maduegbunam Onyechi MBE of Ogbendida Village Onitsha. He retired as principal assistant secretary in the administration of former Eastern Nigerian Government in 1961.

Kpajie Onyechi was born on 10th May 1904 the same year as the great Zik. He belonged to Ndokwaka age grade society of Onitsha. He rose from the ranks in the Civil service to become a principal assistant secretary in the Political Section of the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs in the then Eastern Region of Nigeria. He was awarded the M.B.E. for his meritorious services to the country and for his contribution as a member of the pioneering officials that established the Ministry of Finance and Board of Internal Revenue. He took active part in the standardisation and selection of chiefs in the Eastern Region of Nigeria. He also featured actively in the delineation of constituencies for the parliamentary elections preceding Nigeria's independence in 1960. He did for Eastern Nigeria what Chief Simeon Adebode did for erstwhile Western Nigeria and later Federal Government of Nigeria in the field of public Finance.

Paying tribute to the memory of Kpajie Onyechi, Chief Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe the Owelle of Onitsha said inter alia "He was a very efficient civil servant and the office of the Premier depended largely on him for the preparation of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. In fact he laid the foundation for the post now titled "Director of Budget."

During the episode of Onitsha and non-Onitsha Ibos controversy, he acted swiftly and warily with Mr. Francis Nwokedi (former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour Lagos) and Akunwafor Albert Osakwe in effectively modulating its schismatic effects, to the satisfactory extent of retaining the traditional nature of Onitsha, the identity and participation of its indigenes in the governance of the Town and the indispensable contribution of the non-indigenous population in government.

He was married to the first daughter of Obi Okosi II of Onitsha in the person of Odeziaku Lucy Chigbogu Onyechi of 30 New American Road Onitsha M.B.E. in her own right who also made social and philanthropic contributions towards the establishment and maintenance in Enugu and therefore Eastern Nigeria of the Red Cross Society Women Organisation, Coroner's Club, Social Welfare of children and vocational training of future mothers and newly married housewives.

Late J.M. Onyechi took active part in the preservation of the traditional ozo institution of which he was a title holder with the name Kpajie. He was a candidate and one of the contestants to the Kingship of Onitsha which led to Harding Commission of Inquiry which found in favour of late Obi Onyejekwe I. He was a silent contributor to the building of St. Mary's Catholic Church Inland Town Onitsha by his classmate and great friend late Rt. Rev. Monsignor William Obelagu.

Late Kpajie Onyechi was survived by a widow and many children including former Hon. Justice J.N.M. Onyechi and Mrs. L.A. Agusiobo of the Education Department Onitsha Local Government.



MSGR W.E. OBELAGU

MONSIGNOR WILLIAM ETUKA OBELAGU

HIS name is synonymous with hospitality and he lived a life of giving. Those privileged to encounter him in one way or the other during his lifetime, testify that remembering William Obelagu immediately conjures up in their mind the image of a perfect man of God.

Born on 15th October, 1904 in Onitsha, to the family of Obelagu and Okwuabizina, William was the first and only son of his "pagan" parents. His baptism was in June, 1909, at Onitsha, when young William was only five. He grew up in a religious environment and was heavily influenced by that. It was a time when conversion to christianity was plentiful and everyone yearned for membership of this new fellowship of love and commiseration. It is not hard therefore to understand how as early as 1916 William had begun to nurse the desire to be a Catholic priest. Also at this time he was already a sacristian in St. Mary's Onitsha.

From 1909 to 1918, he had his primary school education in St. Mary's (now Ezechima Primary School) and Holy Trinity School (now Obi Anazonwu Memorial), Onitsha. Even as he worked as a teacher, he attended the pupil teacher's evening classes in preparation for his Teachers' Third Class Examination which he passed in 1923. He then made known to his Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Biechy, his intention to become a priest. Fr. Biechy in turn arranged for his courses in Latin which were given by Fr. Howell. When John Cross Anyogu (later Bishop) took up lessons in Latin, William also was in attendance, with other later prominent Catholics like Mr. William Hinzpeters, Br. Michael Okoye and Mr. Anughere.

It is also while he was a teacher in Onitsha that he got acquainted with Michael Tansi. From this time onwards both became close friends and nursed together, all the more, the desire to take to the priesthood.

William taught until July 1924 when he entered St. Paul's Junior Seminary Igbariam. And when this school transferred in 1928 to Onitsha and became the now St. Charles College, he went with it. Once he was a prefect and later part-time tutor in St. Charles. This time also he studied philosophy and later taught in Christ the King College, Onitsha, for one year, 1933.

In 1934, William was admitted into the Senior Seminary in Eke, near Enugu, to study theology under Rev. Fr. Dr. Kennedy, their Rector and lecturer. He got all the more nearer to the realization of his lofty dreams.

At last, on 19 December, 1937, Archbishop Charles Heerey of Onitsha ordained him a priest with two others, Joseph Nwanegbo and Michael Tansi, in the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Onitsha which was completed and opened in 1935. Onitsha town was thus blessed with a second indigenous Catholic priest.

Immediately after ordination, Fr. William Obelagu was posted to work under Fr. Joseph Obenyer in Aguleri. In 1939, he was in Makurdi Prefecture (now Makurdi Diocese). He was in Oturkpo during the second world war, giving much assistance to the German priests who worked in the area. He worked among the Tiv and Idoma who regarded him highly and received him with love and affection. Then in 1940, he returned to Aguleri, now as parish priest. This took him to places like Umuoba, Nmiata and Dunukofia. During the Nigerian civil war he was once in charge of Igbo-Ukwu parish (1969—70). His ever-ready commiseration was tested by innumerable hungry and naked war-hit "Biafrans" to whom he was no less a father who cared.

Fr. William Obelagu had been in St. Mary's Parish, Onitsha, as from 1949 until the civil war broke out. As 1950 was Holy year, he was privileged to visit Rome on a holy pilgrimage. The following year 1951 saw him, in addition to parish work, a commissioned preacher for the raising of seminary funds for Onitsha Archdiocese.

In 1952 he was made Papal Chamberlain, Domestic Prelate in 1962 and Vicar General and Coadjutor for Onitsha Archdiocese in 1964. As well as member of the Presbyteral Council he was an active member of many other Archdiocesan Councils. He was one time member of the Cinema Censorship Board. His was indeed a life of activity and many onerous responsibilities.

He died in February 1977 as parish priest of St. Mary's Church, Onitsha. His funeral was well attended especially by the indigenes of Onitsha who had always identified him as a man of God par excellence and their aspiritual father. He had won their hearts especially by his deep spirituality. For Msgr. Obelagu, there was nothing comparable with the priesthood, and he embraced it with singleness of purpose. He was a priest of the poor and the needy, the wealthy and the joyful. He showed this by his high regard for home apostolate whereby he saw for himself how his parishoners lived and so shared in their joys and difficulties.

He was a preacher and a powerful one at that.

His death was deeply mourned by Onitsha people.

Rev. Fr. C. A. Obi

CHIEF M. OGO. IBEZIAKO

LATE CHIEF M. OGO. IBEZIAKO,

(ONOLI OGWUDA OF ONITSHA)

IT is hardly to be expected that in this brief tribute one can adequately do justice to the memory of late Chief Michael Ogoejiofor Ibeziako, Barrister-at-Law and the Onoli Ogwuda of Onitsha, Nonetheless, it is only fitting that on Chief Onoli's transition into immortality, one should seek to pay a glowing tribute to this great son of Onitsha who passed away on the morning of the 1st of August, 1975; and in the process, highlight the role which he played in fostering community spirit at a time when Onitsha required the services of dedicated, forthright, prudent and personable youngmen to mediate between the older generation which, with all due respect, was still traditionalist and conservative and the new breed of youngmen who, by reason of their education and other influences, were alive to the need for adjustments in their custom and usages. Even more importantly, community leadership had begun to devolve more on the younger generation who, despite their separate family and kindred group affiliation were then either in Onitsha or elsewhere to which they sojourned in quest of their livelihood, beginning to consider themselves more as a group and hence to deal with the problems of Onitsha a little more dispassionately and with more tact and wisdom.

Chief Michael Ogoejiofor Ibeziako popularly known in his youthful days (and before he took the Ozo title in 1947) as EZUDIMKPA, was born at Onitsha in 1904 to Ogbuefi Ezenwa Ibeziako Kaeme, grand-son of Obi

zeoba who held the Ndichie title of Ogene of Onitsha up to and including 1884. ONOLI was the third son of his father, his elder brothers being Akunwafor Felix Ibumse Ibeziako and Nnanyelugo Robert Nnamdi Ibeziako both of blessed memory. Chief M. Ogo. Ibeziako's mother Madam Oliaku Ofuma (nee Chukwuma) was descended from the Chukwuma (Memkankwe) lineage of the Daike Anyo family of Umuzeoroli.

He had his Primary and post-primary education at St. Mary's School Onitsha and Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar (1920/21) and soon after leaving school, he joined the Civil Service and served as court clerk and interpreter in various towns of Eket and Ikot Ekpene areas of the South Eastern State. It was during this period that he became proficient in the Ibibio language which he continued to speak and write with considerable fluency until his death. Even in those early years, he had begun to show considerable interest, by reason of his attachment to the Administrative Service, in the customs and traditions of the various tribes and clans of the areas where he served. His yearning to improve upon his education was also manifested in that period. Indeed, all through his life he did place great premium on education. Thus it was, that in 1928 he made every effort to proceed to the United States of America for further studies. Since neither his parents nor his brothers could provide only moral but not financial support, he was persuaded not to take what seemed to all the family a risky venture. Nonetheless, he strove hard in his private hours to improve upon his education in order to achieve this one over-riding ambition.

It is true to say that even at the early age of 17 or less, his associates were conscious of particular traits which he exhibited. First, he was extremely hardworking; secondly, he had the indomitable will to succeed and

finally he showed considerable organisational ability, initiative and drive particularly in those days when only a few were fortunate to possess the necessary educational background to serve in the Public Service of Nigeria.

Chief Onoli Ibeziako, earlier known and called EZUDIMKPA (a title he had assumed for the simple reason that he considered himself tall, stalwart, sturdy and capable of inspiring awe in his opponents), served for many years in the Nigerian Secretariat of the Eastern Provinces in Enugu and in the field Administrative Service at Awgu and elsewhere before his transfer to the Resident's Office, Onitsha.

All this while he had made up his mind that he would some day seek to qualify as a lawyer. The nature of his job brought him in close contact with expatriate personnel functioning as administrators and as magistrates and judges. He was keen to learn and to draw useful lessons from his experiences. Indeed he had come to accept early in life the immortal lines of Longfellow which he would often quote from the "Psalm of Life":—

"In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life;
Be not like a dumb-driven cattle,
Be a hero in the strife".

It was typical of the man; he knew what he wanted and set about to obtain it. And so after serving in the Nigerian Secretariat Lagos from about 1940 he voluntarily retired and proceeded to the United Kingdom for further studies in 1942. While overseas he, as was to be expected, worked hard studying Law at the Middle Temple and was called to the bar within a period of 24 months.

On his return to Nigeria, he set up private legal practice at Onitsha as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in June, 1945. Throughout a period of thirty years of private practice which took him to various parts of the country, he continued nonetheless, to play an active role in Onitsha politics and in its social and economic development.

At this point, it is necessary to advert to his role in the social activities of Onitsha in early thirties of this century. He was indeed the moving spirit behind several youth and cultural organisations either as President and Founder of the Onitsha Youths Association (OYA) or as Secretary of the Onitsha Improvement Union. Indeed he was the first indigene of Onitsha to introduce in 1933 an annual Onitsha Almanac highlighting the history, customs and traditions of the Onitsha people. In 1856 he was installed the Onoli Ogwuda of Onitsha and in 1963 was appointed Queen's Counsel (O.C.) before this title was abolished in the same year.

As one has already noted, Chief Onoli Ibeziako throughout his life took considerable interest in the customs and traditions of the Ibos and of Onitsha in particular. Indeed, many of the early British anthropologists and historians who undertook pioneering research work into chieftaincy matters, customs and traditions of the Ibos placed considerable reliance on his immense knowledge and interest in these matters. Prominent among these European pioneers were eminent scholars such as Dr. C.K. Meek, Miss Leithross who occupied for some time Chief Ibeziako's 60 Old Market Road Residence, and Dr. Green. True to the grain, and in line with his educational aspirations, he associated closely with these scholars and with the well-known philosopher and writer, Dr. J.M. Stuart Young who lived most of the time in Onitsha, died and was

buried there. It would not be too far from the truth to say that these associations enabled Chief Onoli to appreciate even more the significance of education not only for himself but also for his sons, two of whom were born in 1928.

Chief Onoli Ibeziako had intended on the basis of his accumulated knowledge of Onitsha history, garnered from oral evidence, his close association with the elders of the village as well as access to intelligence reports while serving as a clerk in the Administrative Service, to produce an authoritative work on the historical, social and economic development of Onitsha Adu na Idu from about 1870. His first pamphlet on the subject published in 1938 was titled "Some aspects of our Ancient Civilisation".

He was extremely proud of his heritage and was determined to record for posterity some of those details which were then within his knowledge. Unfortunately, the monumental work which he had envisioned and to which he had given considerable research effort in the years before 1930, was partly frustrated when he lost most of the relevant documents in consequence of war action during his trip to the United Kingdom in 1942 when the boat on which he was travelling was torpedoed. He continued however to persevere in his efforts. But again time and events were against him. The papers and records which he had collected from about 1945 were again completely destroyed during the Nigerian crisis. Yet unto his last days, he could still recall with some authority, the details of Onitsha history, and the art of traditional divination (igba-afa) which he had deliberately studied in the process of his research work. These details and knowledge still remained with him notwithstanding the misfortunes which worked against the production of a monumental historical dissertation.

Chief Onoli Ibeziako will continue to be remembered as a dedicated patriot, a hard-working and relentless fighter for the good of the community to which he belonged and to which he gave for many years unstinting service. Despite his human failing, he always stood for what was right and was always determined to stand for the truth. He knew his own mind; he would accept no dictation and always wished his relations would be as determined. He may have been a little too firm or maybe too much inclined to stand on his rights. Even so, his colleagues can always attest to his indomitable courage his indefatigable assiduity and his absolute confidence in his ability to succeed.

It is necessary to add that he was clearly and without doubt a "chip" of the old block. To members of his family, he was the great Eze Oba incarnate.

His great grand-father Obi Eze Oba was the Ogene of Onitsha who for many years, apart from an open defiance of the Obi of Onitsha, sustained a family war with the famous Modozie Odu of Umudei; a family war which, because of its intermittent nature and the occasional truce which had to be declared when a common enemy appeared on the scene, has come to be referred to with some special significance as 'AYA ODU NA EZE OBA'.

His interest in the Onitsha Community was amply demonstrated in many ways. Apart from founding and encouraging youth and cultural organisations, he financed and led dance groups and encouraged traditional and revered masquerade displays in his effort to ensure that all that was good in Onitsha custom and tradition was not lost to posterity. Even more importantly, one must not fail to record his untiring efforts to persuade the community to accept in those early years, despite stiff and bitter opposition, that

certain modern and social amenities which were at the time being introduced in Onitsha, were necessary for the benefit of the community. A conspicuous case in point was the general opposition raised about 1932 - 34, by the Onitsha community against the provision of pipe-borne water by Government. It was Chief Onoli Ibeziako, then functioning as Honorary Secretary to the Ime Obi who, with the assistance of some eminent personalities, after months of intensive arguments and hard work, finally succeeded in persuading Ikporo Onitsha that notwithstanding the existence of the Nkisi stream, pipe-borne water was better for their health and that of generations then unborn.

By reason of his many community activities, he has always been locked up by the women folk as their leader. It was small wonder therefore, that in 1956, Ikporo Onitsha whom he served as Legal Adviser, successfully persuaded the then Obi of Onitsha, Okosi II, in 1956 to confer on him the Ndichie Okwareze title of Onoli Ogwuda.

Chief Onoli had always wished that what he lacked in the field of education, he should make abundantly available to his children. Today, by dint of hard work and foresight, he has succeeded in giving some of his children the requisite education and training which they need to survive in a competitive world. Two of his sons are Medical Doctors, two others are lawyers, one being a Chief Magistrate, the other a University Senior Lecturer and a fourth is a Mathematical Statistician. In all, the Onoli is survived by five wives, twenty-two children and about sixty grand-children, brothers and nephews.

Here is a man who had his own ambition and set about achieving it through hard work and dedication. Today a committed man to earth, a man who had delved into the story of Onitsha, worked hard late into the night as a

lawyer, offered public service to his community and who for a brief period served the country as part time Chairman of the Federal Public Service Commission.

Indeed, it must be said that Chief Onoli wrote his own epitaph forty-two years ago in 1933 when he published his first Onitsha Almanac. As we therefore do him honour today in the best traditions of his fathers and in a manner befitting his status as an Ndichie, it is only proper, in memory of Chief Michael Ogoejiofor Ibeziako, Onoli Ogwuda, great grand-son of Obi Eze Oba, son of Olosi and Eze Chima, to quote those immortal lines which, if the truth must be told ought to be inscribed on his gravestone - "Not failure but low aim is crime".

BY
JOHN OKECHUKWU IBEZIAKO



CHIEF DR NNAMDI AZIKIWE
The Owelle of Onitsha

CHIEF DR. NNAMDI AZIKIWE

WHEN a star is so bright we tend to forget that it comes from the firmament. When a person is so famous and well known, the tendency is to take him and his greatness for granted and we forget that he comes from a particular town and local government before becoming a national figure.

Nigeria's first indigenous Premier of erstwhile Eastern Nigeria, Governor-General and first President of the Federation of Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was born on 16th November 1904 by Onitsha parents late Obededom Chukwuemeka Azikiwe of Ogbeabu Villave and late Rachel Chinwe Azikiwe of Ogboli-Eke Village Onitsha. He had his elementary education in CMS Central School Onitsha (1911—15). He entered Methodist Boys' High School Lagos (1915—18) and became a pupil teacher at St. Jude's CMS Central School Oraifite in 1919 and at CMS Central School Onitsha (Jan. — March, 1920). He later went to Hope Waddell Training Institute Calabar (April — August 1920), Methodist Boys' High School Lagos (September 1920 — September 1921). From here after a brief civil service career as a third class clerk, with Treasury Department Lagos in 1921—24 he became a recruit in former Gold Coast (now Ghana) Police Force in July-September, 1924. Zik's work experience included being a Solicitor's Clerk to the late Mr. Justice Graham Paul at Calabar in 1925.

By a chance meeting of the late Dr. Kwaggir Aggrey, at a public lecture his desire to drink deep of the spring of knowledge was enkindled. After the first unsuccessful attempt to stowe away, he eventually made it in 1925 when he sailed to the United States with little or no funds. He entered storier College Harper's Ferry, West Virginia U.S.A. in (1925—27). He later went to Howard University Washington and Lincoln University and got his BA Hons and M.A. respectively. He also got MSC Hons in Anthropology in 1932 from Lincoln University. He had since

been honoured by all his alma maters in America with honorary LLD in 1946 by Lincoln University, honorary D.Litt by Storer College in 1947 and honorary LLD by Howard University in 1954. In 1959, Michigan State University honoured Zik with honorary LLD.

Besides editing the African Morning Post in Ghana on his return from USA in 1934, Zik founded Zik Press Ltd. in 1937 which produced some of the following newspapers:— West African Pilot in Lagos, Nigerian Spokesman at Onitsha, Eastern Nigerian Guardian in Port-Harcourt Southern Defender in Ibadan. Sentinel at Enugu. He also founded the now famous African Continental Bank Ltd. In the field of sports he founded the Zik Athletic Club whose players in soccer were famous in Nigeria league matches.

As an Onitsha man, Zik took the prestigious Ozo title of Nnanyelugo in Agbalanze Society. In 1962, the then Obi of Onitsha Obi Onyejekwe I honoured him for his contributions to the Nation by which he brought honour to his hometown. He was given the honorary chieftaincy title, of Ozizani Obi as a Red Cap Chief. Later in the seventies, he took the higher chieftaincy title of Owelle during the reign of Obi Ofala Okagbue I.

In the early fifties when enemies of progress planned to deny Onitsha the building of a modern market which has always been the pride of the town, it was Zik as the then Premier of Eastern Nigeria and Minister in charge of the portfolio of Local Government that ensured that the aspirations of Onitsha indigenes were not frustrated. The Onitsha Town Council had borrowed half a million pounds sterling for this purpose. A motion by an honourable member of the Eastern House of Assembly nearly stopped the loan to the Onitsha town Council. Thanks also to the intervention of Chuka Ikpeazu Esq., then a practising lawyer at Onitsha who threatened to sue the government for betraying the trust of the Council. A modern market had since been a feature of development, in Onitsha.

During the Obishop dispute of 1962 when Harding submitted his report to the Eastern government under Dr. M.I. Okpara, this report was nearly suppressed, for political reasons but for Zik's intervention and truthful advice to the government: "Publish the report and accept or reject it." It was not the type of Report that could be published and rejected. So government had no alternative but to publish and accept it.

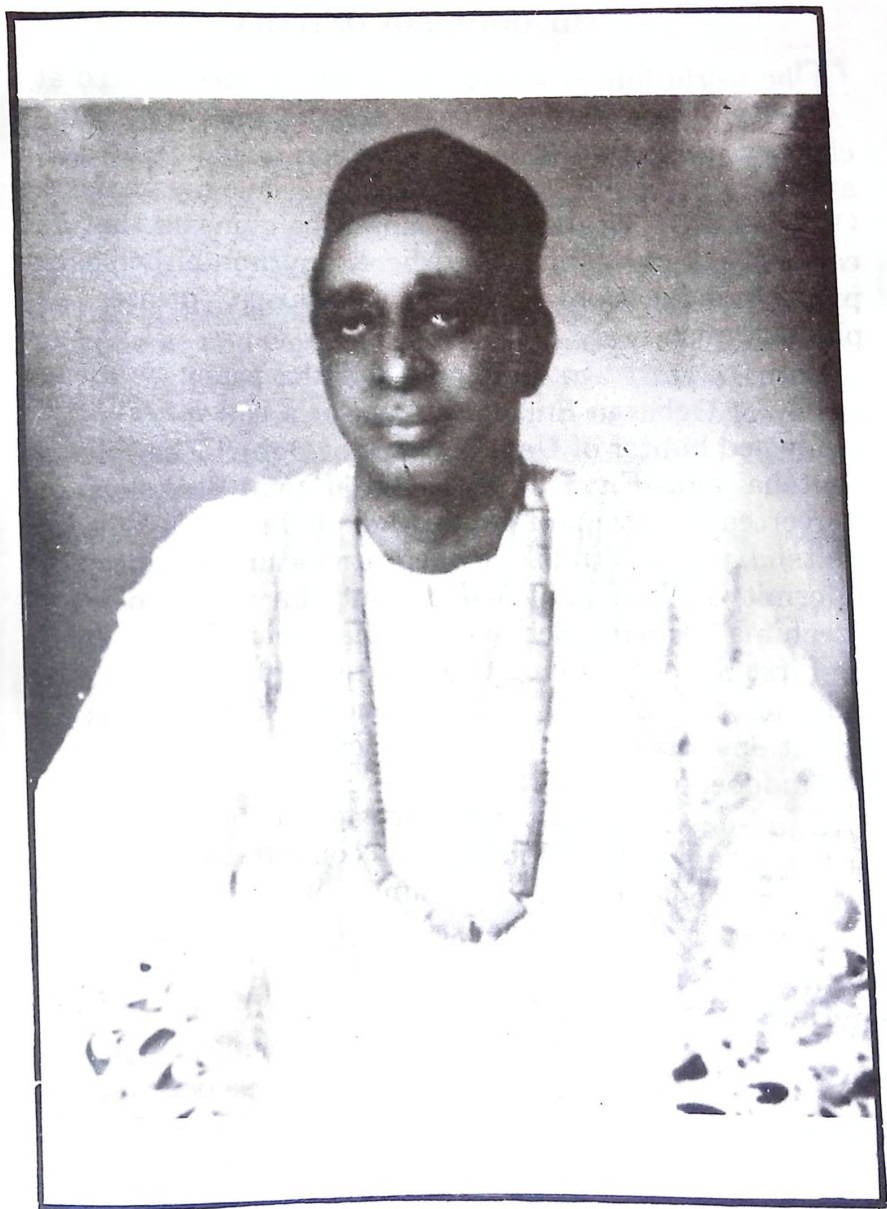
Again after the Civil war during the Main Market dispute in Onitsha when Administrator Asika's plan to re-allocate market stalls by the Market Authority became controversial, Zik was not found wanting in taking a stand on the issue. When some Red cap chiefs and agbala-na-iregwu adopted double standard in punishing those who reneged on the boycott of the stalls and paid for them, Zik condemned the questionable stance of these Red Cap chiefs in no uncertain terms.

Although normally resident at his Onuiyi Haven at Nsukka, Zik's interest in his hometown Onitsha had never been in doubt. Like all Onitsha indigenes he fulfills his obligations to his Age Grade Society of Ndokwaka.

The Owelle of Onitsha has ensured his immortality in the memory of Nigerians and Africans alike. In the field of education he founded the University of Nigeria in 1960 and in his characteristic originality ensured that the University was the first to award its own degrees, in Nigeria. In the field of sports which he took active part most of his life, the government of Anambra State, has named the multi-naira million sports stadium at enugu after Dr. nnamdi Azikiwe. For his contributions in journalism, the Federal Government has named the ultra-modern Press Centre in Dodan Barracks after Dr. Azikiwe. Every important city in Nigeria including the Federal Capital Lagos has a street named after the great Zik. He holds Nigeria's highest national award - the Grand Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic (GCFR).

In Onitsha his hometown he holds the senior chieftaincy title of Owelle a Red Cap Chief of Cabinet rank.

As Chinua Achebe called Onitsha, "a gift of the Lordly Niger," it is without doubt that the Owelle of Onitsha, Chief Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe is the Almighty's gift to Onitsha nay Nigeria.



CHIEF J.U. ETUKOKWU M.F.R.
The Odua of Onitsha

CHIEF J. UBANYIONWU ETUKOKWU M.F.R.

THE ODUAH OF ONITSHA

The world famed writer Oscar Wilde once arrived at New York International Airport and was being checked through the custom. When asked if he had anything to declare, he said "Nothing save my genius". Of Chief J.U. Etukokwu it cannot be gainsaid that he can declare his genius anywhere, anytime either as a pioneer, educationist, artist, organiser, printer or philanthropist.

Born 78 years ago in 1909 of Onitsha parentage to the family of Ogbuagu Etukokwu Obiozor a lanky, brave and renowned hunter of Umu Nwanne of Ogboli-Eke Village Onitsha and Enyi Caroline Nwabunie Etukokwu a converted christian, of Umu-Udah of Umuasele Village, Onitsha, young Etukokwu despite a natural handicap of deformity in the leg, attended Saint Mary's School (now Ezechima Primary School) Onitsha, where he obtained his First School Leaving Certificate in 1926. As an only child of his mother, and conscious of his physical limitations, his thoughts centered early in life on how to earn independent living.

His association with adult friends inspired him to learn and develop proficiency in commercial subjects such as book-keeping, accounts, typewriting and shorthand at a time when these subjects were not taught in schools. By dint of hard work and determination, young Etukokwu read as many commercial text books as he could, often-times teaching himself. The effort was crowned with success because he passed the overseas examination of Pitman and Sons London, in Elementary Book-keeping and Accounts before he reached standard four and by the time he passed standard six in 1926 he had obtained the Intermediate Certificate in some Commercial subjects

from Pitman's London. This was no mean feat at this point in time in Onitsha and Nigeria for that matter.

By dint of self-practice and hard work he perfected himself in printing trade. With time, he was able to print books and manufacture exercise books and note pads, which he sold in his own bookshop and other bookshops in town. With funds realized from the business, he arranged for a postal tuition Overseas to further his education in Commerce. Through this he studied and passed the membership examination of the Institute of Commerce and was awarded a fellowship diploma of the Institute (F.C.I.) Birmingham, in 1950. By virtue of this fellowship diploma, he gained exemption in the Chartered Institute of Secretaries (C.I.S.) London examination of 12th July, 1959.

He tried his hands in public letter writing and typing documents for litigants and the general public at Upper New Market Road, Onitsha in the thirties. It is interesting to see how fortune smiled early on young Etukokwu for while his contemporaries earned seven and six pence a month those days as pupil teachers, he earned £2.00 a day or £40.00 a month. This booming typing business was made possible by the happy patronage of one European, Dr. J.M. Stuart-Young who paid him ten shillings for every 1,000 words typed. Young Etukokwu also had a small bookshop where he sold books he ordered direct from India and Britain.

From the sheer accident of recruiting more typists to help him meet up with his business of typing for the public, young Etukokwu was advised to constitute into a school those typists some of whom were learners. Thus, it happened that the watershed of his life came in 1936 when he founded what later became a Business School named after Etukokwu himself, the first in Eastern Nigeria and perhaps in Nigeria with only 30

students. It may be mentioned here that the former Minister of Education in Eastern Nigeria and proprietor of Abbot Boys and Girls Secondary Schools Sapele and Ihiala, Chief G.E. Okeke was one of these foundation students of Etukokwu Commercial Institute; Mr. Etukokwu then was proprietor, principal and the only teacher of this new school in 1936.

With growing public awareness of the importance and commercial subjects, more business schools sprang up IN THE SOUTHERN PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. In 1942 Etukokwu spear-headed the formation of Association of Commercial School Proprietors of which he was the chairman from 1942 — 1959. When the Federal Government recognised the Royal Society of Arts London Certificates, Etukokwu School of Commerce was one of the four commercial schools approved by the Ministry of Education to enter students for West African Cambridge School Certificate examination, a monopoly hitherto enjoyed exclusively by grammar schools like DMGS. The advantage to the commercial school student was that he could sit both the R.S.A. and Cambridge school certificate examinations in his final year thereby killing two birds with one stone.

In 1961, when the school celebrated its silver jubilee the Government of erstwhile Eastern Nigeria approved grants-in-aid or financial assistance to the school.

In recognition of his pioneering efforts in blazing a trail on an unbeaten path, educationally, the late Prime Minister of Nigeria Alhaji Tafawa Balewa conferred on Chief Etukokwu the national award of Member of the Federal Republic (MFR) in 1964.

With the school take-over by Government, Chief Etukokwu retired meritoriously in 1970 with these encouraging words from the Inspector of Education Onitsha Urban, "You are assured of the so much

goodwill that all your pupils and students have for you and the debt of gratitude the country owes you for your immense contributions to educational progress”.

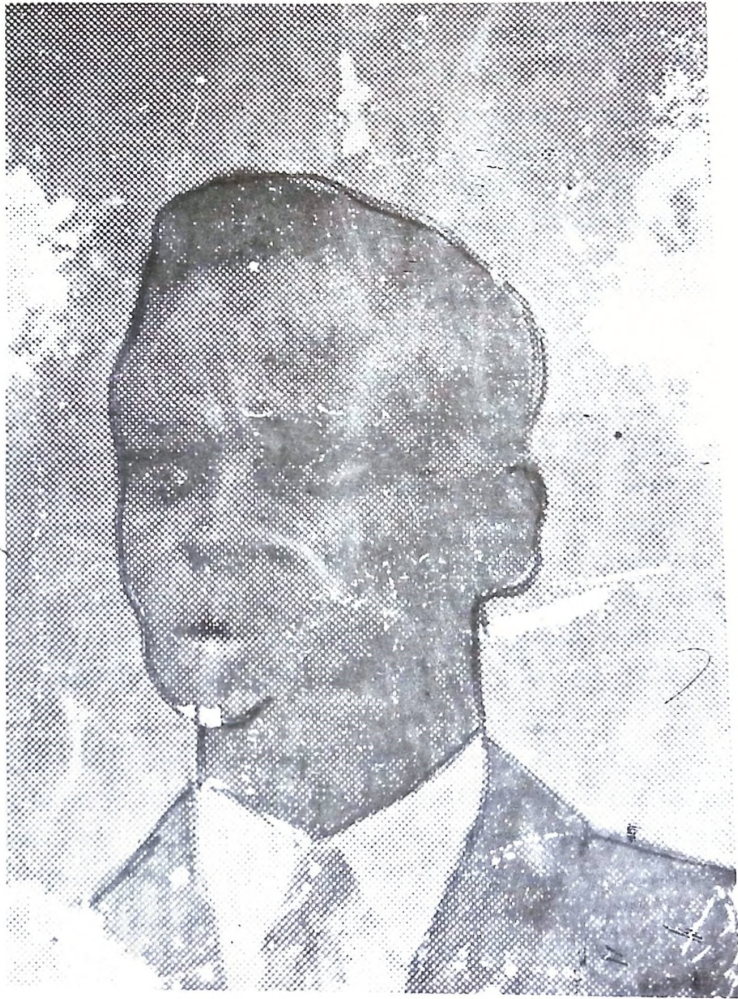
Chief Etukokwu joined the Red Cross Society in 1964 and was elected its President till 1966. After the Civil War he experimented on hotel business. The two branches of Hotel De Pride at Oguta Road, and Saint Stephen's Road, Onitsha, bear eloquent testimony to the versatility of the Chief and his expertise in business management.

In 1984 the Federal Military Government appointed Chief Etukokwu a member of the Study Group on Funding Education. In 1959 he was initiated into the prestigious Agbalanze Society of Onitsha. It is to his lasting glory that he organised the Otu Odu Society of Onitsha which is the female society of Onitsha women who have fulfilled themselves in Society and are known for their white attire and heavy ivory rings worn on the legs. The credit of bringing men and women together to form clubs which later crystalised into Age Grade Societies belongs to Chief Etukokwu who started it for the first time.

In 1962 the Association of Onitsha brave hunters called The Egbunu Oba honoured Chief Etukokwu by presenting him with a silver sword as a token of honest leadership as their patron.

In 1972, His Royal Highness the Obi of Onitsha appointed him as a red cap Chief with the title of Odua Ngu of Onitsha. In 1977 he became a member of Odua Chieftaincy Conference of Nigeria - an organisation that has its membership at both sides of the River Niger.

Chief Etukokwu is a self-made man who rose from obscurity to prominence. But his prominence did not come by happenstance. It wasn't delivered to him on a platter of gold or silver. For not being one who was born

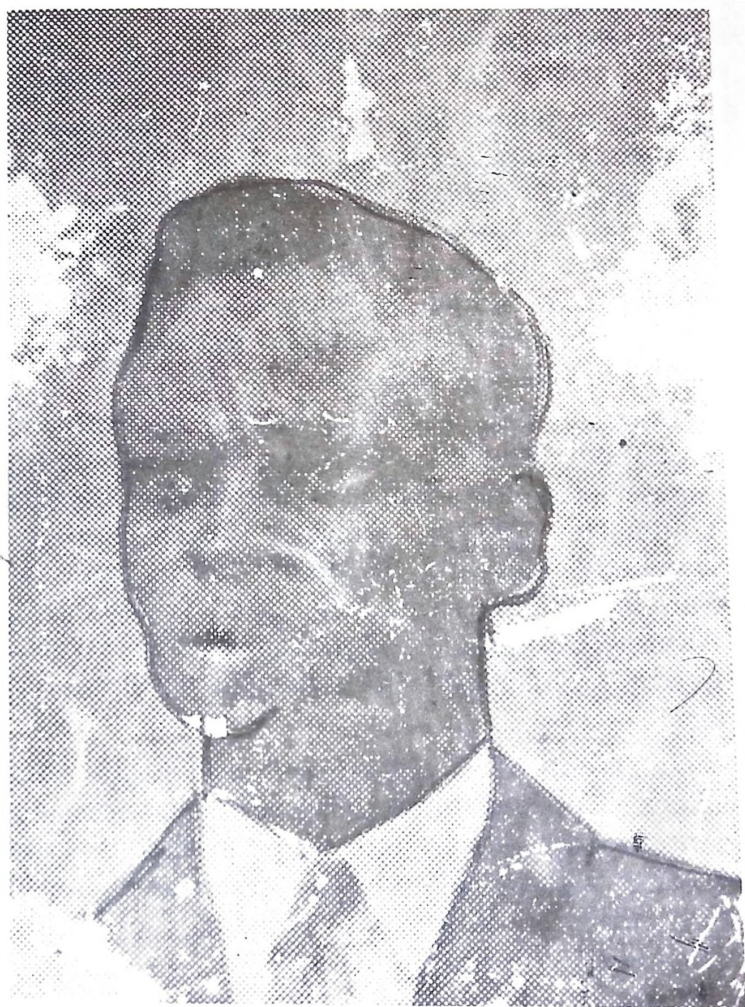


MR. JOHN A. OKECHUKWU

with golden or silver spoon in his mouth, he knew the meaning of hard work. He toiled relentlessly, tirelessly for everything he got everything he is. He believed in work as a necessity. Like Abraham Lincoln, he believed that God gave us two hands and only one mouth therefore the reason why we should starve.

In furtherance of his belief, he exerted himself everyday of his life for the accomplishment of his ideals. For him, work was as comfortable as sport, for him work was sport.

No wonder in 1987 the Rotary Club of Onitsha presented Chief Etukokwu with a Certificate of recognition of his vocational contribution to Society in the field of commercial education. In 1987 he was made the first Life Vice President of Onitsha Chamber of Commerce in appreciation of his contribution to commerce and training of students of commerce and printing industry.



MR. JOHN A. OKECHUKWU

LATE MR. JOHN OKECHUKWU

IT is indeed true that people live in deeds and years. Late John Azubuike Okechukwu lived years to achieve many things. He was a natural made artist, sculptor and tutor of fine arts in the St. Charles Teacher Training College, Onitsha.

It is a matter for regret that the Nigerian Civil War destroyed most of his works of art like the statue of Ekwue in front of Achukwu Ochanja's residence on Awka Road and another one in front of late Akunne Ifeajuna's house at New Market Road, Onitsha. The entrance to former St. Mary's Catholic School Onitsha still has ruins of the artistic gate ingeniously decorated with Ibo cultural designs.

Born in 1908 and died on 9th August, 1944, Azubuike Okechukwu erudite but unassuming master was of the famous Ogbo Family (land owners) Umuasele Village Onitsha. His mother Nwagbo Omekenyi daughter of Mozie Odu is from the Ife Family of Umudei and sister to Nwagbo wife of Akunne Odoguiko of Ogbozoma Village Onitsha. He lived with his aunt having lost his parents at very young age.

He attended St. Mary's School Onitsha and later St. Charles College Onitsha. He taught in these schools. His contemporaries were late Stephen Balonwu and Justice Moses Balonwu the erstwhile Chief Justice of East Central State and chairman of the National Universities Commission.

Teacher Amene 89, remembers John as a Catholic, a dedicated teacher and an accomplished artist who aimed at excellence and perfection. Mr. Amene learnt and became proficient in draughtsmanship. He was easily the best artist and sculptor in Iboland.

ys before Enweonwu and Fred Okechukwu
me to the scene of sculpturing and artistic work.

It is said that some of his works included the design of
the old Bishop's House at Holy Trinity Onitsha. The
crucifix of our Lord Jesus Christ still in use in C.K.C.
chapel is the hand work of late John Okechukwu and
must be over fifty years old.

John Okechukwu married the late Christiana
Nkemdilim Emodi of Ogboli Agbor and is survived by
many children including Mrs. Jane Egbuna, Mrs. Maria-
Thymphorosa Akosa and Mrs. Franca Machie.



SIR LOUIS MBANEFO

SIR LOUIS MBANEFO:

NIGERIA'S LEGENDARY MAN OF LAW

Onitsha occupies a unique place in Nigerian history, and deserves a great deal more than a passing reference. Lest we forget that it is the home of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first President of an independent Nigeria. Lest we forget also that, before the arrival of railway or roads, the rivers and creeks were only means of access into the hinterland. Consequently, it was on their banks that the first colonial settlements were established. For this reason the early missionaries (particularly the C.M.S. missionary expeditions) penetrated 500 miles up the Niger, and laid at Onitsha, the foundation of the Niger Mission.

Furthermore, lest we forget, that here, at Onitsha, Samuel Ajayi Crowther consecrated in 1864 was later nominated Bishop on "Western Equatorial Africa beyond the Queen's Dominions"

Onitsha therefore led the way in religion, scholarship, professionalism, trade, and administration in IGBOLAND; and the coming of a new generation, which Professor J.F. Ade Ajayi described as "educated elite" and which produced the leaders of nationalist movement for self government, and ultimately the independence of Nigeria. Against the background of Onitsha on the Niger — we set the story of SIR LOUIS MBANEFO — a great son of Onitsha and a learned man in the law.

Born at Onitsha — May 13, 1911 — son of Chief Mbanefo ODU. The "ODU" incidentally, is one of the highest six traditional Red Cap Chiefs of Onitsha, but the Mbanefo family have held the chieftaincy successively in living

memory. They belong to the landed gentry — part of the aristocracy of the IGBO community.

EDUCATION

Michael Crowther, in his work entitled "The Story of Nigeria", indicated that the period, 1910 - 1914, preceeding the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates, was "one of the most crucial in Nigeria history; for it marked the beginning both of effective administration and of the rejection of standards and customs that had endured almost intact for many centuries".

This means, in historical terms, that Sir Louis was born at a time when Igboland was being subjected, in large measure to Western influences — a time when education was becoming available to a wide range of people through the spread of missions.

Accordingly, Louis spent his childhood at home - attended St. Mary's School, Onitsha, but proceeded to the Methodist Boys' High School, Lagos, and later King's College. In 1932 he entered the University of London, where he obtained the Bachelor of Law Degree in 1935, and was called to the English Bar at the Middle Temple London, in the same year. By then he had acquired an insatiable thirst for knowledge instead of going into practice after his call to the bar, he proceeded to the University of Cambridge and was entered at King's College to read "Humanities, graduating Bachelor of Arts (CANTAB) two years later.

Returning to Nigeria in August 1937, he enrolled as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, and established legal practice at Onitsha — the first Igbo lawyer in Nigeria!

As we shall see later in this story, Sir Louis led the way, in several directions — at the Bar, on the Bench, in the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), — and at the Onitsha Town Council. He was closely followed, at the Bar, by

Ernest Egbuna, who returned home three years later — enrolled at the Supreme Court in August 1940 — the second IGBO lawyer.

Mbanefo and Egbuna were familiar figures at the Supreme Court Library during the appeal sessions in Lagos. They shared those days in the early forties — with other newly enrolled lawyers — among them, Teddy Nelson — Williams, Adeleke Adedoyin, Ladipo Odunsi, and Ladipo Moore. Indeed, there were fewer men at the Bar in those days. Daddy Onyeama, Coco-Bassey, Ibeziako, Ikpeazu, Raymond Njoku and Chukwu Nwapa, all arrived later at the scene.

Shortly before Louis arrived home in 1937, however, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe had returned to Nigeria from America. Historians observed that on arrival in Nigeria, “Zik”, embarked on three major schemes which had tremendous impact on that age. First, he founded the “West African Pilot”, a newspaper which became the main outlet for nationalist aspirations. Secondly, he geared up the then Lagos Youth Movement into something more than a “Western faction.” He nationalised” the Lagos Youth Movement a clarion call went out to Igbo youths and they joined the new “Nigerian Youth Movement”.

Thirdly, and more significantly, — as Coleman puts it, “Zik infused political vitality into the Youths of the day.” Mbanefo, then a young beginner-lawyer, was among the youths who responded to the new impulse but he kept a low profile in politics. He stayed on local level at Onitsha, became a member of the Onitsha Town Council, concentrating on the reform of the Onitsha market and general distributive trade on the Niger.

Sir Louis was not a political material. He did not stay long nor go far in politics. He was not mentioned anywhere in the annals of the West African Students’ Union (WASU) in London, which Justice Fatai-Williams, in his

autobiography, described as "the power house of West African politics".

Rather, he seemed to prefer the quiet places - social pursuits and services. He was a person of gentle gait and humane ideas - soft spoken, kind hearted, with a flair for law and natural justice - reminiscent of ELLESMERE - the stuff of which the CHANCELLORS - the Fathers of Equity, were made.

OUTSTANDING

As the story goes, in 1964 at the age of 33, Mbanefo became the Chancellor of the Anglican Diocese on the Niger, an office that he held till his death thirty one years later. In that capacity, he was Legal Adviser to His Grace Archbishop Patterson Head of the Church of the former Province of West Africa (Anglican Communion).

He devoted considerable time to church work while keeping pace with public duty, both at local and State levels. In fact, and for a brief period, he represented the then Eastern Provinces on the Nigerian Legislative Council in Lagos. One outstanding merit of this career was the manner in which Sir Louis held the scales equally between the Church and the State.

His judicial record was unique. He was the first Igbo Judge of the High Court of Eastern Nigeria. In former days, judges were not, normally, appointed direct from the Bar to the Bench. The first recorded precedent of direct appointment to the Bench was the Honourable Mr. Justice Bankole Rhodes in 1945. Otherwise, the former Nigerian Judges came from the Lower Bench. Mbanefo was an exception to this tradition. He was appointed from the Bar as judge, in 1952, and held High Court Sessions in several parts of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria.

In 1958, aged 47 years, he was appointed a Judge of the then Federal Supreme Court of Appeal, and the following

year, in 1959 — the eve of the independence of Nigeria, — he returned to Enugu as the first indigenous Chief Justice of Eastern Nigeria.

Fearless

At 50, in 1961, he was knighted by Her Majesty, the Queen of Great Britain and, in the same year, he sat as Ad-hoc Judge at the International Court of Justice at the Hague in Holland. For forty years (1937 - 1977), Mbanefo stayed - a steady servant of the law - a period almost evenly divided between the Bar and the Bench.

One question then arises:

For what will Sir Louis be remembered? Could it be for his education? - a "King's man" in Lagos, London and at Cambridge? The answer is No. Could it be for his nobility of birth - a descendant of Mbanefo family of Onitsha? The answer again, is No! Could it then possibly be because he was the first Igbo lawyer?

Here again the answer is in the negative. What then is it?

Sir Louis will be remembered partly for his work on the Bench, mainly, for his service to the church, but mostly for endless sacrifices away from the Bench - on public boards and corporations; health and educational institutions, and away from home on the panel on trade union problems in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Federal Government Salary Review Commission which was immortalised as the "Mbanefo Salary Awards."

As a Judge, Sir Louis was fair and kind, but completely fearless. The All-Nigeria Law Reports carry abundant evidence of this assertion. Fairness - as in the celebrated case at Enugu: *Dixon Gokpa vs. Inspector-General of Police* -1961 All-Nigeria Law Reports (423—427) - where, on appeal the Judge insisted on retrial of the case by another Magistrate, on the ground that denial of representation by counsel, in a criminal matter, amounted to denial of a fundamental right to fair trial.

Such situation recurred frequently in the early sixties in which Sir Louis invoked the power of the High Court to order a new trial of cases in the Lower Court where such a power should be used without prejudice to the appellant.

To Sir Louis, the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution were quite clear and should be applied rather than referred to the Supreme Court - on issues involving mere application. consequently, the Constitutional Reference from the High Court, Northern Nigeria, was struck out - by Mbanefo C.J.E.R. — Ademola C.J.F. Brett, Unsworth and Taylor F.J.J. — concurring. It was a matter of the application of constitutional provisions.

The Supreme Court held, on that occasion "That Judges of the High Court are expected to observe and apply the provisions of the constitution where their application has been raised. There may, however, be cases where the application may involve its interpretation. In such cases, the courts may decide to refer questions as to the meaning of the law and the scope of its application, or decide the questions and leave it to the aggrieved party to raise them on appeal," - vide F.S.C. 327/1961, 1961 All Nigeria Law Reports (622).

All this is but one side of the story. Before joining the Judiciary, Sir Louis did one important thing. He got down to home and family life - which clearly provided the foundation and support for his chequered career. He married Elizabeth, who subsequently became Lady Mbanefo, and shared with her husband the honour to this day.

The sixth daughter of Daddy Maynes Oluremi Coker — a native of Hastings in Freetown, Sierra Leone, who had served for several years with the United Africa Company at Onitsha, Elizabeth was educated at St. Mary's Convent School, Holy Child College, Lagos, and

Hillcroft College at Surrey in England — specialising in Home Economics and the Social Sciences.

In common with her husband, she devoted considerable attention to church work and social services - including the Young Women's Christian Association, the Catholic Women's Organisation, the Council of Women's Societies and the Business and Professional Women's Club, on which she served, in several capacities.

Perhaps the greatest contribution by Lady Mbanefo to nation building are the Nigeria Girls Guides Association which she led as the Chief Commissioner from 1980 till now and the Vice President of the Nigeria Red Cross Society Eastern Nigeria, an organisation on which was laid the burden of relief duties during the civil war.

In her capacity as leader of international Youth Organisations, she travelled extensively in Africa Europe Middle East, the Carribean, the United States of America. In her, Nigeria found a dynamic and dedicated youth leader and Sir Louis - a loving grace, courage and
"The men who have founded the track we tread."

BY
CHIEF FOLARIN COKER

A Sunday Times Publication



CHIEF C.E. OKOLONJI
The Late Ojiba of Onitsha

LATE CHIEF C.E. OKOLONJI THE OJIBA OF ONITSHA

IF ever there was a modern Robin Hood of Onitsha, and a successful playboy, surely Chief Okolonji the late Ojiba of Onitsha popularly known as EDIBOSS qualifies. The historian who described Napoleon Bonaparte might well have had Ediboss in mind when he wrote of Bonaparte: "A scholar by charity with no fortune but his talents, he rushed into the lists where rank and genius had arrayed themselves and competition fled from him as from the glance of destiny. He knew no motive but his interest, he acknowledged no criterion but success and worshipped no God but ambition."

The greatness of Ediboss lay in the fact that as a playboy and iconoclast, he rose from nothing to something. He did all the wrong things that could have put him in trouble. But despite his shortcomings and rascally tendencies which he exhibited in a large scale and grand style he was both a success and successful.

He was a man born lucky and despite insurmountable odds including his excesses, he succeeded where less resourceful and the daunted could have succumbed and fallen below. He was one of the best dressed men of his age and time. He took the coveted ozo title, thanks to the benevolence of his half sister Mrs. Obiamaka Opene. In spite of the hesitation and unwillingness of the then Obi of Onitsha, H.R.H. Onyejekwe I, he was made a red cap chief. This was not without an undertaking by his kinsmen to take responsibility for whatever he might do wrong in his exalted position.

Christopher Okolonji was born in 1910 to Okolonji Nwabunie of Ogboza village, Onitsha and because he was a twin at a time when twins were a taboo, he was

quickly baptized Christopher by a Roman Catholic priest. His father named him Chukwuemeka, but as he grew older he added Ediboss to his own, following the fashion of those days to answer the name of Europeans or foreigners. There was one Mr. E. Debordes in one of the commercial firms at Onitsha who caught the fancy of young Okolonji. With the passage of time E. Debordes became simply Ediboss. Mr. Christopher Okolonji was not alone in this craze for foreign names. Most school boys in Nigeria before Zik and Ojike made foreign names irrelevant fancied these meaningless foreign names.

Christopher passed through St. Mary's School Inland Town Onitsha with contemporaries like Akunne J.I. Nworah. In his characteristic way he managed to do his Standard Six and went away with a pass in English which earned him a Part B. Certificate of those days. After a stint at Government School, Asaba he found himself in DMGS Onitsha for one year. From there he joined the Prisons as a warder before a relation, late Mr. Obiesie of Ogboli Olosi took him to Samaru Zaria where he became a staff of the Agricultural Department. As was to be expected his stay with this Government Department was short-lived. He got into all sorts of jobs and troubles in Zuru and Ankar all in the Northern States of Nigeria.

As early as 1930 when he was just twenty, he committed the abomination of breaking the customary masquerade law by beating a masquerader who flogged a friend of his. This was a serious crime in Onitsha of those days when a masquerader was synonymous with a ghost or spirit. After committing more atrocities on top of what he did, the elders of the village in order to retrieve their good name in Onitsha, arranged and paid the prescribed fine knowing their son could be an unrepentant outlaw.

When potable water was introduced in Onitsha in 1929 Capt. D.P.J. O'Connor officially declared it open. Because of a chance meeting with this senior Administrative officer, on this occasion, in which pleasantries were exchanged the uneducated onlookers saw in Ediboss talking with the white man as bestowing on him the halo of authority and respectability Ediboss quickly capitalised on this and claimed that he had been given the power to control the taps in the Inland Town of Onitsha. The extent to which he terrorized innocent folks especially girls who wanted to fetch water was better imagined than described.

In 1939 he married beautiful Maria Edozie of Ogbe Onira in Umudei Village of Onitsha whom he met in Kingsway Stores Kaduna. He had since married two other wives.

He organised concert troupes that toured many parts of the country. His famous lyrics and songs suited the mood of young folks of the forties. Ediboss was extremely well known throughout most important cities now State capitals because of the large audiences he entertained and sometimes offended during his peregrinations as a music hall comedian. More importantly he was an astonishingly witty man when in good form and more often than not he was in good form.

Whatever may be Okolonji's excesses and shortcomings, he would long be remembered as a most colourful personality Onitsha ever had. At any occasion he was easily a Beau Brummel and well dressed. It was little wonder that some people in the neighbouring towns in admiration of Ediboss, took such titles as Chief Ediboss I of their town.

He enjoyed life and made no secret of any windfall that came his way. For he made sure everyone knew about it all, like when he played the role of King Jaja in a

documentary film and was said to have made a fortune therefrom. Ediboss was charitable to a fault and would spend his last penny to make others happy or show off his opulence. His many jokes and wisecracks will long be remembered by people such as

- i. Before the waves come, his boat shall have landed safely ashore;
- ii. He considered himself a qualified candidate for kingship because of his commanding stature, big legs and hands and little intelligence as a king according to him was supposed to have counsellors to advise and do his thinking for him;
- iii. Once when he failed to pay the fee for using the facilities of Zik's Athletic club Yaba, Zik threatened a legal action. In his characteristic humour he told Zik that if he carried out his threat, he would kill him in a duel so that he would share in Zik's fame even in death.
- iv. He said that but for bad fortune the ulaga masquerader would not be coming out from a dilapidated house.
- v. A chimpanzee could be caught in a trap but it will eventually escape.



H.R.H. J.O. ONYEJEKWE I

OBI JOSEPH OKWUDILI ONYEJEKWE I (1962 — 1970)

SINCE 1900, the selection of Samuel Okosi as Obi Onitsha consequent upon the result of Commission of Inquiry at Asaba seemed to have set pattern for the selection of future Obis. History repeated itself during the tussle for the throne which led to the selection of Okosi II and Onyejekwe. Many candidates presented themselves. The people divided themselves into camps of supporters and were uncompromising in their attitude to reach an agreement. Finally, government intervened.

Although Okosi II died on December 22, 1961, the traditional proclamation of the death did not take place till March, 1962. It was therefore shocking when an unauthorised announcement of the news was announced over the N.B.C. network at Enugu due to the ultra-ambition of some of the aspirants to the throne.

Obviously, it was the turn of Umuezeoroli to select a candidate; but such an exercise could only take place after the last Ofala of the late Obi which is the traditional manner an Obi's death is officially announced. In the circumstance, the radio announcement was condemned as untraditional and irresponsible, having emanated from the mass-media arm of an indigenous government which ought to know better.

No amount of belated corrections that followed could hold the hands of would-be candidates from indulging in natural activities to prepare their ways for presentation as candidates to king-makers. No sooner the last ofala took place than several candidates from

various Chimaevi families embracing Umuezeoroli, Isiokwe and Ogboli Olosi, appeared on the scene and resumed the well-known battle.

The atmosphere was tense. The Umuezeoroli presented four formidable candidates in the persons of J.J. Enwezor, M.A. Odita, J.M. Onyechi and J.O. Onyejekwe. All of them were ozo-titled-men, except Mr. Odita who later took the title as a prerequisite of his eligibility for selection. The rest of the remaining candidates, too numerous to be mentioned by name, subsequently paled into insignificance due to their inability to participate in the energy-consuming tussle. They must have doubtless, congratulated themselves for having decamped earlier, and saved themselves of the wrath of corruption, mudslinging, squandemanism and animosity that later became the order of the day.

As the Umuezeoroli selectors were divided so the Ezechima kingmakers were split over the approval of a final candidate. While some king-makers, principally from Umuezeoroli, gave approval to the candidature of Enwezor, the Ezechima organisation comprising all sections of the majority of the Ezechima king-makers gave its blessing to the selection of Onyejekwe.

Meanwhile, the Ndichie were split over the matter too. The majority of Ndichie were supporters of Enwezor. For example, out of the six Ndichie ume, four - Onowu, Odu, Onya and Owelle — supported Enwezor, while two — Ajie and Ogene — supported Onyejekwe. Howbeit, in Onitsha custom what counts effectively in the final selection of a royal candidate is the numerical strength of Umu-ezechima who are the king-makers and not the influence and affluence of Ndichies many of whom are not king-makers, although a candidate finally approved by the Umuezechima is afterwards presented to Ndichie of all ranks.

At this stage when it appeared that progress is not being made to resolve the matter, the Government has to intervene and thereby ordered a Commission of inquiry to probe the dispute. An expatriate Senior Administrative Officer, Mr. R.W. Harding, O.B.E. was appointed to conduct the inquiry with the following terms of reference:

"To examine the claim of the principal contestants to the stool of Obi of Onitsha following the death of Obi Okosi II and to advise Government as to who among them has, by tradition, custom and, if desirable procedure adopted so far in his selection, the best claim to recognition."

The inquiry started on July 26, 1962 and ended on October 3, 1962. When the inquiry began both Messrs Odita and Onyechi did not prove to be as formidable in their claims as Messrs Enwezor and Onyejekwe. Odita's case was badly weakened by the widespread allegation that he took his ozo-staff to the Catholic Church to be blessed before the final initiation ceremony.

This action was proclaimed to be "alu", an abomination, by members of Agbalanze Society and for the reason he was compelled to perform ikpu alu (propitiation of the gods for an abominable act). Although, Mr. Odita denied ever committing the allegation, yet the damage which the accusation had done to his cause was devastating in the extreme.

The claim of Mr. Onyechi was weakened by the Dial — Enendu episode which happened ninety years ago in culminating in the decision by elders of yore that from thence onward no person from Enendu's clan or Ogbendida should be allowed to take an ndichie ume title. But the matter at issue was the selection of a candidate for the obishop which is a more serious case that would elicit stricter measures to uphold the verdict of the ancients.

Mr. Onyechi claimed to be a direct descendant of Enendu and for the reason alone his chances of success became very doubtful.

In spite of Mr. Enwezor's surging support by a fairly large number of agbalana-iregwu and ndichie, the case built against him to the effect that his father had no Onitsha blood in him, much less that of Ezechima, but was an integrated Nsugbe man into the Daike Anyo's kindred of Umuezeoroli. Besides there was the accusation by his rivals that his Udo rituals and ceremonies were beset by many irregularities, to wit; that he did not perform his ceremonies at the Udo shrine proper, but in the vicinity of the Udo ground. Secondly, that the "caping" ceremony performed on him by the Onowu at the time was grossly contrary to Onitsha tradition. Thirdly, that he did not present cows to the six kindred groups of Onitsha for acceptance to indicate unanimous support of the populace. Fourthly, the ofo was given to him not by the Ugwu-na-Obamkpa family but by a member of Obi Anazonwu's family.

The case of Mr. Onyejekwe was clear. First, he had the overwhelming support of the Ezechima king-makers and the Agbala-na-iregwu. Secondly, his Udo rituals and ceremonies took place at the Udo shrine and were performed by the Udo priest, Ezeocha. Thirdly, he presented six cows to the six kindred groups of Onitsha and they were gladly accepted. Fourthly, he was given the ofo by the Ugwu-na-Obamkpa family headed by their Okpala, Nzekwu Omodi.

In his recommendation to the Government after concluding his inquiry, Mr. Harding wrote inter alia:

"Now for Mr. Enwezor and Mr. Onyejekwe, both men endeavoured to accomplish much. It is because of their activities, not because of those of Mr. Odita and Mr. Onyechi, that Onitsha is in the present state.

"In historical times civil war would have been the traditional solution to this impasse. The clash of forces such as these two contestants have gathered would have resulted in tumult which would have proved the most dreadful in Onitsha's history. Mr. Onyejekwe, with his superior resources, would have won the war."

In contemporary struggle from which external forces of law and order were removed Mr. Onyejekwe would also emerge victorious.

"Though the 'procedure adopted, by these two contestants is far from traditional that of Mr. Onyejekwe, with less limited affiliations, accords more with traditional requirements. An obi cannot rule with only the support of his kindred unless that kindred has a dominance and authority over the whole clan which Umuezeoroli no longer possesses. Insufficiently, few of the Ndichie who adhere to Mr. Enwezor have a status which can counter-balance this general deficiency of support."

"I therefore 'advise Government' that Mr. J.O. Onyejekwe 'has.... the best claims to recognition."

This was how the long-drawn dispute came to an end with Mr. Joseph Okwudili Onyejekwe officially recognised by Government as the 19th Obi of Onitsha.

Born in 1909, Obi Onyejekwe was educated at St. Mary's Catholic School, Onitsha inland town, Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha and King's College, Lagos. In 1931, he entered the Police Department as a Cadet Inspector of Police. During his training, he distinguished himself as a brilliant and a keen sportsman. For many years he was captain of the famous Nigerian Police Football Team in the thirties.

After his training he worked in many places like, Lagos, Abeokuta, Ibadan, Akure, Benin, Warri, Umuahia, Ikot-Ekpene, Calabar etc.

His efficient service earned him an overseas training course and rapid promotions. Before his retirement in 1961, he had meritoriously attained the post of Assistant Commissioner of Police.

Like his predecessor, his reign as Obi of Onitsha was marked by a very stiff opposition by his chief opponent, Mr. J.J. Enwezor and his henchmen. Mr. Enwezor was anything, but the Obi of Onitsha de jure. His regalia was nothing short of that of Obi. He was saluted Igwe by his supporters. He was called up from sleep early in the morning by the ufié gong. He performed the Ofala festival. There was therefore no peace in the town. In fact as a sanction of ostracism was imposed on Enwezor's supporters by the Umuezechima faction the town was rent into two opposing camps.

When Obi Onyejekwe installed Mr. Edibos Okolonji as Ojiba of Onitsha, Mr. I.O. Omekam as Agba of Onitsha, the opposing Ndichie Ume-Onowu, Odu, Owelle and Onya, who refused to recognise Obi Onyejekwe, took out summonses in the Onitsha High Court against the newly installed chiefs claiming that their installation was traditionally incomplete without their participation in the ceremonies.

They eventually succeeded in obtaining judgement restraining the new chiefs from wearing their traditional red caps until they performed the omitted ceremonies, although the defence counsel submitted no case plea as he claimed that under the Eastern Nigeria Chieftaincy Law the court had not jurisdiction to hear the case. He appealed against the judgement to the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

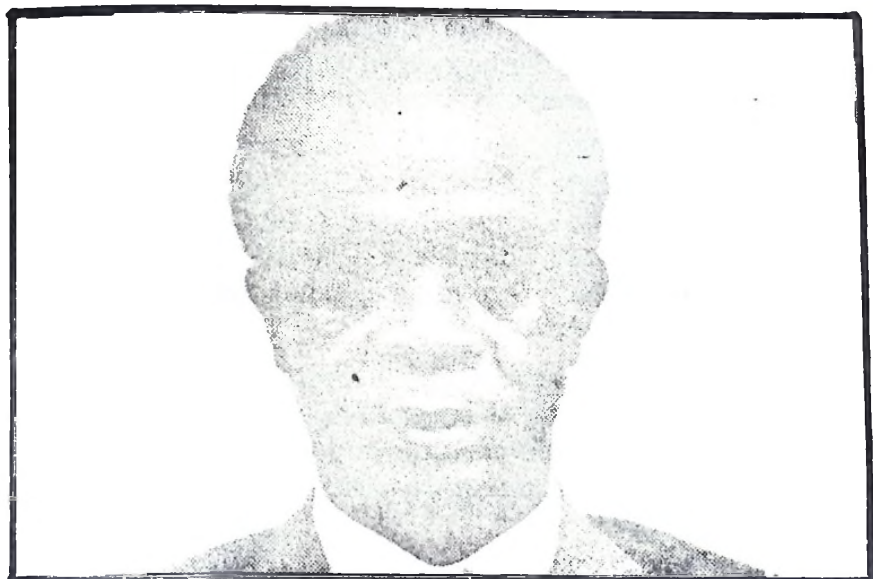
By virtue of his official status, Obi Onyejekwe was the President of the Onitsha Urban County Council and a member of Eastern House of Chiefs. Throughout his reign, he did all he could to bring peace to the town. He

would not allow his supporters to do anything that would widen the existing gulf of disunity. In fact he soft-pledged most of the time, to the chagrin of some of his supporters, in his honest endeavour to restore peace in his domain.

Government intervention was very necessary in order to allow the requirements of the chieftaincy law of Eastern Nigeria to run the gamut in respect of Harding's recommendations so as to ensure peace, stability and good government in Onitsha. But Machiavellian diplomacy which characterised party politics in Eastern Nigeria seemed to incapacitate the Government to act.

Igwe Onyejekwe who joined his ancestors in 1970 is survived by his only widow Mrs. Grace Onyejekwe daughter of Akunne Oranye and seven daughters, Mrs. Victoria Amechi alias Nwaezekaibie, Mrs. Florence Nneka Molokwu a legal personnel with Federal Department of Customs and Excise, Mrs. Virginia Arinze Principal Girls Secondary School Odekpe, Mrs. Franca Offia, school mistress, Mrs. Obiozo Aghadiuno a bilingual confidential secretary, Mr. Obiora Onyejekwe working in U.S.A., Dr. Uchenna Onyejekwe Medical Officer with Nigeria Navy, Lagos, Mr. Ifeanyi Onyejekwe a textile technologist in printing business and Mrs. Obianuju Chukwurah, a housewife, and nephew Mr. Chike Akosa.

(Culled from Groundwork of Onitsha History and Culture by S.I. Bosah).



DR. L.O. UWECHIA, OBE,



DR. J.O. ONYEACHONAM

DR. L.O. UWECHIA & DR. J.O. ONYEACHONAM

DOCTORS L.O. Uwechia and J.O. Onyeachonam were pioneer medical practitioners from Onitsha whose services to their homeland and Nigeria will bear repetition and difficult to efface from Onitsha annals.

In the field of medicine, Dr. Uwechia was the first Ibo doctor to establish private practice in the Eastern Region of Nigeria in the forties after voluntary retirement, from the civil service. His area of activity extended from Onitsha to old Owerri Province or what may rightly be called Imo and Anambra States.

With the acute dearth of hospitals and medical doctors in the erstwhile Eastern Nigeria the amount of soccours brought to thousands of helpless patients in remote towns and villages by Dr. Uwechia could be imagined than described.

Dr. Uwechia later served the country in various capacities as member of the Eastern Nigeria Public Service Commission, Enugu. He was the first chairman in 1961 of Eastern Nigerian Housing Corporation with Head Office at Port Harcourt. It was the corporation's Board under his Chairmanship that planned housing estates like Trans Amadi Residential Layout now popularly called RAINBOW TOWN, Rumuibekwe Housing Estate, Rumuobiakani and the Niger Bridge Head Housing Estate at Onitsha and Abakpa Nike Enugu. He later served as member of the Federal Public Service Commission.

Dr. Onyeachonam founded the first indigenous hospital the Ifejiokfor Hospital at Awka Road Onitsha. He played a leading role in the activities of the Nigerian Medical Association of which he was the Eastern Region Chairman. He died in 1970 after the Civil War when his hospital ruined by the ravages of war was at the point of

rehabilitation. He will long be remembered for his amiable and genial character, tall athletic build and deep interest in both his medical practice and matters affecting the welfare of Onitsha.



NNANYELUGO S.I. BOSAH

MENTION of the name S.I. Bosah among Onitsha people conjures many things to many people. For members of Agbalanze Society of which he is a member he is a loyal and very active member who has served and is still serving in its very important committees. To most people he is a historian and a living encyclopaedia of Onitsha native law and custom.

Except for works like "Some Aspects of Onitsha Ancient civilization," by late Chief M.O. Ibeziako, Jerry Orakwue's aspects of Onitsha history virtually lost with the civil war "QUO VADIS by erudite Nnanyelugo Ben Chukwudebe, "Kingship in Onitsha" by Ojinnaka Sam Ifeka, "A King in Everyman" by the American Richard Henderson, only the "Groundwork of the History and Culture of Onitsha" published in the early seventies by S.I. Bosah, is the only authentic and comprehensive history book written by an Onitsha indigene that exists today. Its importance as a reference work on Onitsha history and culture cannot be gainsaid.

According to S.I. Bosah himself, it was his father, a retired Roman Catholic Catechist who generated his interest in the history of Onitsha, when he was a boy. It may be recalled that his late father was one of the earliest Onitsha men to solemnise their marriage at the Holy Trinity Church, Onitsha before it became a Cathedral.

His late father told him many stories about the pioneering work of the Catholic Mission in Iboland generally and Onitsha in particular. He also told him stories about the early works of the C.M.S. Mission, the development of commerce and socio-political advance on the Lower Niger. His curiosity led him to ask many questions and the very informative answers he received highly illuminated his horizon and goaded him into

searching deeper into the origin of Umuezechima people. When he grew up he read books by scholars like C. Meek, P.A. Talbot, Sir William Geary, G.T. Basden, Major A.G. Leonard and a host of others who gave valuable information about Onitsha people. He also travelled extensively in Benin or Edo, Ika, Igala and Igboland communities looking for materials to enable him forge all he could about the background of Onitsha people whose history he condensed in his now famous "Groundwork of The History And Culture of Onitsha". Besides this work, S.I. Bosah has three unpublished works which will see the light of day before long. They are:—

- i. Conquest of Fear
- ii. Nigerian Labour in Industry
- iii. The Family in Onitsha Indigenous Society.

Not only in the writing of history is Nnanyelugo Bosah famous. As an adviser and consultant in cultural and customary laws of Onitsha, he is first class and in class altogether his own. His high integrity and approachability makes him a ready reference and authority for the student seeking for source materials for his treatises or examinations, for the native who has problems on correct interpretation of Onitsha Customs for a writer who wants correct facts about Onitsha from his articles, books or general information, S.I. Bosah is the man to meet. Above all, however, Mr. Bosah is a great peace maker either for individual families or sections in Onitsha. No wonder he has served and still serves in important committees affecting the well being of Onitsha.

Nnanyelugo Samuel Ikemefuna Bosah was born on 24th July, 1911 at Isiokwe, Onitsha in Anambra State. He was educated at the Holy Trinity Primary School, Onitsha Waterside from 1918—24. He worked at the Nigerian Government Colliery (now Nigerian Coal Corporation) 1929—31. He received his technical training at the Nigerian Railway (Now Nigerian Railway Corporation) Technical Training School 1933—38. In 1946 he was promoted Workshop Foreman. In 1947 he became Associate Member of the Institute of Works Managers London. He studied British Railways Workshop Management in Derby England. He studied advanced economics (part time) at the Derby College of Technology and from Ruskin College Oxford, he did a correspondence course in English Journalism and Industrial Administration. In 1953, he was promoted Workshop Supervisor and in 1961—63 he became acting Assistant Works Manager. He retired from service in 1962 two years after Nigeria attained political independence and a year before she became a Republic.

On retirement, S.I. Bosah became a maintenance engineer at Nigersteel Factory Emene, Enugu, from 1962—63. In 1963, he took the Ozo title, thereby becoming a member of the prestigious Agbalanze Society with the name Nnanyelugo. He was a member of National Industrial Safety Council and editor, SAFEGUARD, a monthly magazine of the Federal Ministry of Labour (FACTORY Inspectorate Division). In 1970—73 he became President of Onitsha Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He was Chairman Board of Governors of Onitsha Technical College, Onitsha Urban Council 1982—85. He was President Onitsha Improvement Union, Zaria 1954—58 and Lagos in 1964—67. He is Vice-Chairman Peace and Development Committee of Agbalanze Society.

Nnanyelugo S.I. Bosah of Odoziaku Age Grade Society is of Isiokwe village Onitsha. He is married to Omeokachie Cecilia Obiageli of Onyemadiuke Age Grade Society, daughter of late Akunwafor Hezekiah Osumgbe Nwanolue of Ositadimma Age Grade Society of Onitsha and a retired Railway official of Umuogbolu Village Onitsha and Mrs. Ilom Egbuniwe of Ogboli Village Onitsha

Nnanyelugo and Omeokachie Bosah, are blessed with six children and grand children



LATE HON. ERNEST N. EGBUNA
Former Speaker Eastern House of Assembly

ERNEST NWANOLUE ODOGWU EGBUNA
1912—1958

ERNEST Nwanolue Egbuna was the 2nd Son of Inspector of Police Kpajie Joseph Afamefuna Egbuna of Ogboli Olosi Village Onitsha and Madam Nwakwo Egbuna.

He was born at Kwale in Bendel State. He attended the Warri Government School and the Holy Trinity Roman Catholic School, Onitsha.

He later attended the Methodist Boys' High School, Lagos and Kings College, Lagos, where he successfully sat for his Oxford School Certificate.

In 1929 he taught at St. Gregory's College Lagos for three years and in 1932 he went to study Law at Kings College, London. He took a degree in law and was called to the bar at Lincolns Inn in 1940. He returned to Nigeria the same year. While in U.K. he engaged in tennis, and football, two fields in which he distinguished himself.

Returning to Nigeria in 1940, Ernest Egbuna set up his own practice in Onitsha. Five years later, he was nominated by the Governor to be the Member representing the Ibo Division in the Legislative Council. He also served on the Central and Regional Scholarship and Development Board. He also held positions in several public offices. In 1947, he served as Member representing the professional salaried and wage earning classes for Eastern Region in the House of Assembly. He also attended and took part in talks on the revision of the Nigerian Constitution in Ibadan in 1950 as a representative of the Eastern Region.

In 1950, he closed his legal practice and joined the Colonial Legal service as a Crown Counsel. He served in

Lagos and was subsequently transferred to Kaduna. He was later posted to the Eastern Region.

In September 1954, he was appointed Vice President of the Eastern House of Assembly. In October 1954, he became the FIRST SPEAKER of the Eastern Region House of Assembly.

He married Mrs. Christiana Enuboda Egbuna nee Akpom of Umuezeoroli Village Onitsha, the daughter of Mr. T.G.O. Akpom and Beatrice Akpom. She was educated at St. Monica's College Ogbunike as a teacher.

The marriage was blessed with five children namely Beatrice Uzoamaka Egbuna a Lawyer and at present a Principal legal officer with the Federal Law Reform Commission Lagos, John Okechukwu Ernest Egbuna a Lawyer and private legal practitioner, Miss Kathleen N. Egbuna a Biochemist and a research officer at the Nigerian Medical Research Council Yaba Lagos, Miss Chinwe Egbuna, a forestry officer with the Anambra State Government and Charles Nnamdi Egbuna, an agricultural economist running NEC AGRIC SERVICES at Onitsha, as a private agricultural consultant.

Ernest Nwanolue Egbuna died on the 14th day of August, 1958 at the University College, Ibadan Teaching Hospital after a brief illness.



VEN. C.O. IWUNO

VEN. ARCHDEACON C.O. IWUNO

HE was born about 1915. His father, Mr. Iwuno of Odimegwugbuagu quarters of Odoje, Onitsha was a famous native doctor. His mother Madam Enendu Iwuno hailed from Obosi.

When in 1933 he passed Standard Six in Central School, Onitsha, there was no place for him in the employment for him in the Church, School of the State. He was applicant, applying for nothing and without hope of ever being able to earn a living. Those of us who recall those days know that a large number in that group lived without a job, without a wife, without issues and have died unsung. But God in His infinite mercies and providence created an opportunity for him not in Onitsha his hometown and the seat of the Diocese on the Niger, but rather in distant Owerri in 1935 under the late Rev. A.C. Onyeabo, later Bishop. He was not employed as his assistant not even as a regular school teacher, nor as a Catechist but as a Local Helper — a post that carried a big title that signified nothing. He was there for odds and ends, whatever he was asked to do he did it at Mbieri Obazu, asking no question. In fact if there was anything reserved for a local helper it was the job of a bell ringer — “Oku Mgbiligba.” From this beginning that could not be humbler he rose to the staggering height of an Archdeacon. Of Archdeacon C.O. Iwuno his success in church life is epitomised in the quotation. This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

His movement up the slippery pole of advancement was not sure, quite often it was frustrated. In 1938 he attained the eminence of becoming a school teacher at Anara (no more a local helper). From there he moved to

Ogidi Central School under the famous Headmaster Okongwu, a no-nonsense headmaster not even if he could bring down the moon (mbu m'inekoto onwa). The advancement appeared to be coming. For an untrained uncertificated teacher as he was designated then to be appointed a Head Teacher was an achievement. He was made the Headmaster teacher of Umunede Grade II School in 1942. He was reaching up. None could have guessed he would soar so high.

From there he was never after being anything more than a Headmaster. 1943—1945 saw him as Headmaster of Christ Church School, Onitsha and Church Teacher of St. Christopher's Church, Onitsha. It was in this post of a Church Teacher that he was arrayed in cassock and surplice of a priest and leading a funeral procession. Onitsha for the first time saw the new Iwuno, Enwendu's son, and exclaimed like Israelites of old, "Is Saul the son of Kish also among the Prophets?" And from this elevation he qualified to marry Miss Christiana Nkiruka Odiamma who has shared all the vicissitudes of life with him ever after, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health. Even when he went to Awka College to train as a Catechist for three years beginning in 1946, she too was also trained for the same length of time as a Catechist's wife in Amanwayi. The wisdom of the Church ordains that as a man trains for the exclusive service of God his help mate should also be so trained. Greetings to Mrs. Iwuno for standing by him all along the rugged road that came thereafter. Those of us who recall his time as a Catechist in training know that he regularly led his class in all examinations and his was a brilliant crop of aspirants. He did not choose to train as a School Master little knowing that God in His infinite mercies has reserved a special niche for him in the line he followed.

As a Catechist he worked for 5 years, definitely longer than most people did then, before proceeding to train for ordination. Many people wondered, including members of the O.P.U., why such a delay ensued. Yes but God in His infinite mercies gave him courage to await his time.

1955—57 saw him training in Union Theological College, Umuahia, for ordination. On December 21, 1957 he was ordained Deacon at All Saints' Cathedral, Onitsha, a year after he was ordained a Priest.

From now onwards it was a swift movement up the ladder of success: Superintendent of Warri 1959 — 1961, Superintendent of Umuleri District 1962—64. His good work showed up and without soliciting, he was sent to St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, for training 1964—1965. There he had the opportunity of drinking from the spring of Anglicanism and of meeting eminent clergymen from diverse corners of the Anglican world. Needless to say he acquitted himself most creditably and brought home the "Golden Fleece" of the College Diploma. It looked as if he was doing the last lap of the great race when he was Superintendent of Nibo District, Pastor of Uruagu Nnewi during the war and then the Superintendent of the most coveted district in the Diocese — Christ Church, Onitsha. He did not know that the best was yet to come, when he was due to retire, it pleased God to put into the mind of our revered Diocesan Bishop, Right Rev. Dr. J.A. Onyemelukwe, to appoint him Archdeacon of Nnewi. The appointment came too late but his stirring qualities shone brighter then than ever before.

All through his career, he fenced B.C.M. Church, continuing the Church building of Christ Church, Owerri when he was only a deacon, of his finishing St. Andrew's Church building Warri and organising its dedication, of his finishing St. Gabriel Umuleri Church building of St.

Matthew's Nibo and organising its dedication, etc, etc. This is in the tradition of the great Archdeacon G.T. Basden to whom the credit for building and dedicating so many churches in this Diocese goes. If the list of churches he saw completed and others he organised the foundation laying of is made, it would be most impressive and awe-inspiring. Archdeacons are renowned for looking after the physical structures of the church they preside over, but he appeared to have out-matched all. This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.

His maternal uncle was the great church man, Mr. J.C. Onwuatu who sponsored his schooling. He was a pillar of Immanuel Church Onitsha and the dispenser of merits from his office in Ozalla. God has worked through him from a beginning at school to passing Six, then local helper, school teacher, catechist, a priest and finally to the great eminence of being an Archdeacon.

by J.O. Onyejekwe



LATE BARRISTER LAWRENCE ODIATU VICTOR ANIONWU

A TRIBUTE TO DEAD COMRADES

DR. SAM O. EGWUATU AND BARRISTER L.O.V. ANIONWU

1. Samuel and Lawrence
Both of blessed memory
And indigenes of Onitsha Ado
They emerged at a time
When secondary education was beginning
To make a foothold on this side of the Niger
2. They were both students of K.C. Lagos
Where they passed the Senior Oxford
With exemption from London Matriculation
The one joined the staff of C.K.C.
Onitsha in 1938
3. Both taught science subjects
The field in which they majored
Brilliant youngmen one would say,
They gave of their best
In spite of the lack of adequate infrastructure.
4. Not quite long after,
The one found himself doing medicine overseas
And the other soon followed and studied law.
Their early showings of brilliance
Soon matured into intellectualism.
5. They returned each at his own time
To join the motley group of elites
To give service to Nigeria our country
While Sam rose to the post of Director of
Medical Service Eastern Region L.O.V.
as the other was fondly called
Became one of Nigeria's indefatigable
Ambassadors

6. Both were accomplished gentlemen
Calm and serene, never boisterious
They joined Ifunanya Age Grade of Onitsha
Sam went further to join the Agbalanze Society,
But also: death snatched them all
Before they could attain 3 score and 10
7. What a great loss to bear!
What a yawning vacuum thus created!
But what a fitting end to a life well lived
I write of Comrades Dr. S.O. Egwuatu
And patriotic Barrister L.O.V. Anionwu.

May their souls rest in the Lord.

BY

OGBUYOR ACHIKE



MOTHER MARY MAGDALENE ORANU



MOTHER M. BERNADETTE ANYOGU (I.H.M.)

**REV. MOTHERS MARIA BERNADETTE ANYOGU
AND CLARA ORANU:
FIRST INDIGENOUS CONGREGATION OF THE
IMMACULATE HEART SISTERS**

IN January, 1925 Bishop Shanahan, sent four girls (holders of first school leaving certificate) from Onitsha to Sister Mary C. Walker in Calabar to be trained teachers because with the presence of this sister in Calabar, the town had become the cradle of women education in the Vicariate of Onitsha. Other girls were sent to her from different parts of the Vicariate, some of them by their parents to obtain education. Among the four girls from Onitsha were Maria Anyogu (now Mother Mary Magdalene of the Immaculate Heart Sisters), Sister Mary Charles wrote to her superior about these four girls from Onitsha: "The Bishop is sending four from Onitsha after Christmas, then I shall have twenty-three. One of these girls is sister to the Seminarist who we hope will be the first native priest in the Diocese. They are a good christian family, both father and mother daily communicate; these would be a good material to work on."

That was how Clara Oranu and Maria Anyogu, found themselves among the group that Sr. M.C. Walker was nurturing for the native Sisterhood. According to Mother Mary Bernadette, although she liked all the good training she was getting from Sr. Mary Charles, her mind was far from becoming a religious, but Mother Clara Oranu was evidently captivated.

When in 1928 the Bishop sent for Maria and Clara to

return to Onitsha and await the arrival of the Holy Rosary Sisters coming out for the first time, Maria was delighted to go back home, but Clara stayed behind, intending to continue her training in the religious life. Maria said to her "Aaee, isi n'ima ana, Nnoduzikwa chibe Sister, na anaam Onitsha", (that is Oho, you say you won't go home. All right, stay on and become a Sister. As for me, 'am off to Onitsha). The Bishop wondered why Clara did not come back with Maria and was told the story. "The bishop declared", said Mother Mary Magdalene, "I sent her to Calabar to become a teacher and not a sister, and he sent Fr. Heery off to Calabar to fetch her back." That was how Clara Oranu was not among the four lucky girls who were received into the Postulate in Anua on 15th January, 1931. Fr. Anyogu, newly ordained, the first native priest on this side of the Niger, was present at the ceremony.

When the Holy Rosary Sisters arrived, the four girls trained in Calabar helped them to start the first Convent School — Immaculata School, Onitsha. They were equal to the task because they had been given an all-round education in Calabar in the art of teaching, domestic science, horticulture, needle-work and handcrafts, and most importantly they had been taught more about God and the Catholic faith, and how to teach it to others. In other words, they were not just ordinary school teachers, but also catechists.

The Holy Rosary Sisters were doing great work among the women and girls in Onitsha, but like Bishop Shanahan and Sister Mary Charles, before him, Bishop Heerey, who had inherited the work of Bishop Shanahan, who had now left Nigeria for health reasons, realised that the training of Igbo women and girls would not be complete without the influence of Igbo Sisters. He was thinking prayerfully about this problem when he

was making a pilgrimage to Lourdes in either 1931 or 1932. There he got the inspiration to found an indigenous Sisterhood under the title of "The Most Pure Heart of Mary. "When he came back he announced to the lady-teachers that he was planning to start a congregation for Igbo girls, and asked if they would like to join. They were very enthusiastic, especially Clara who was still nursing the vocation she received while in Calabar. The Bishop carefully explained to them that in this way of life, marriage and child-bearing were entirely ruled out. "At this time," said Mother Mary Bernadette, "I was not yet interested. It was when I was in Ireland with Miss Eileen Ojiako in 1932, teaching the Igbo language to the Holy Rosary Sister, that I heard the call, and communicated the news to the Bishop when he came to Killeshandra."

INITIAL PROBLEMS

Bishop Heery started to petition Rome for permission to start the congregation canonically. According to Mother Mary Magdalene, it was not easy to get this permission. She said that Rome's first reply was that all the missionaries back from Nigeria were unanimous in maintaining that the Catholic Church was still young in Nigeria, and that it would be advisable for these girls wanting to embrace the Religious life, in the meantime to try to practise faithfully the Catholic religion which was so demanding in its observance, before aspiring higher. Perhaps this reply was affected by the fact that already Bishop Shanahan had applied for permission for Native Sisterhood in the same Vicariate not long before. However, Bishop Heery was undaunted by the unfavourable answer, and continued to apply and pray for the permission. As the girls were getting impatient,

especially Maria, who had no obstacles, the Bishop asked her if she would like to join the Holy Rosary Sisters. Mother Mary Bernadette said she bluntly refused. "I said, I would rather go and join the Eastern African Sisters about whom I had read in magazines." Clara, although she had not yet got the consent of her family, had been reminding the Bishop since she came back from Calabar, of the thought so dear to her heart and according to her, the Bishop had said "Are you going to do it all alone? Wait for more candidates." After the Bishop had announced to the young teachers his intention to start a Native Congregation, the enthusiastic ones consulted their parents, and the people were so vehemently opposed to the idea, and some of them gave so much threat that all the girls except two, gave it up and continued teaching with the Sisters. They soon got married and settled down happily. To Clara, her mother said, "Udi otu nkea anadu anu di mobu muta nwa abarokwom anya. Ifugo g'amulumu amu, nyabuna nginwa go amuta-aza umu". (This kind of society in which marriage and child-bearing are out of the question is very strange to me. See, I gave birth to you, and you must give birth to other children.) Clara did not continue to argue with her, but treasured her vocation in her heart. The case of one girl is rather pathetic. She continued to struggle with her people to let her go, but they simply would not hear of it. In the end the girl neither became a Sister nor got married until old age. Their Calabar counterparts must have received similar oppositions, more or less.

FIRST BEGINNINGS AT IHIALA

In a letter addressed to His Eminence, the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda dated 29th September, 1936, His Grace Archbishop

Heerey asked permission to institute a Congregation of Native Sisters in his Vicariate, under the title of the "Most Pure Heart of Mary". His Eminence in reply (Prot. No. 3570/36 of 23rd October, 1936) most kindly granted the permission. The Bishop wasted no time in receiving the girls as aspirants. Clara still had some difficulty with her people and so Maria was received on the 26th April, 1937. Soon after that, Clara became free and was received on the 24th of May, 1937. Mother M. Magdalene declared during an interview, "On the 24th of May 1937, I finally left my mother's house".

"On October 7th 1937, feast of the Holy Rosary, in a letter to the Mother Superior of the Holy Rosary Sisters, Ihiala, His Grace formally decreed that the diocesan Congregation of the Sisters of Most Pure Heart of Mary be erected under the direction of the Sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary."

On that day, the two Aspirants moved from Onitsha to a little house prepared for them in the premises of the Holy Rosary Sisters at Ihiala. Thus, two of the most educated girls in Onitsha, in those days, became the foundation members of an Igbo Native Sisterhood. They were placed under the direction of Sister Mary Rose Maquire of the Holy Rosary Sisters.

IMPRESSIONS CREATED

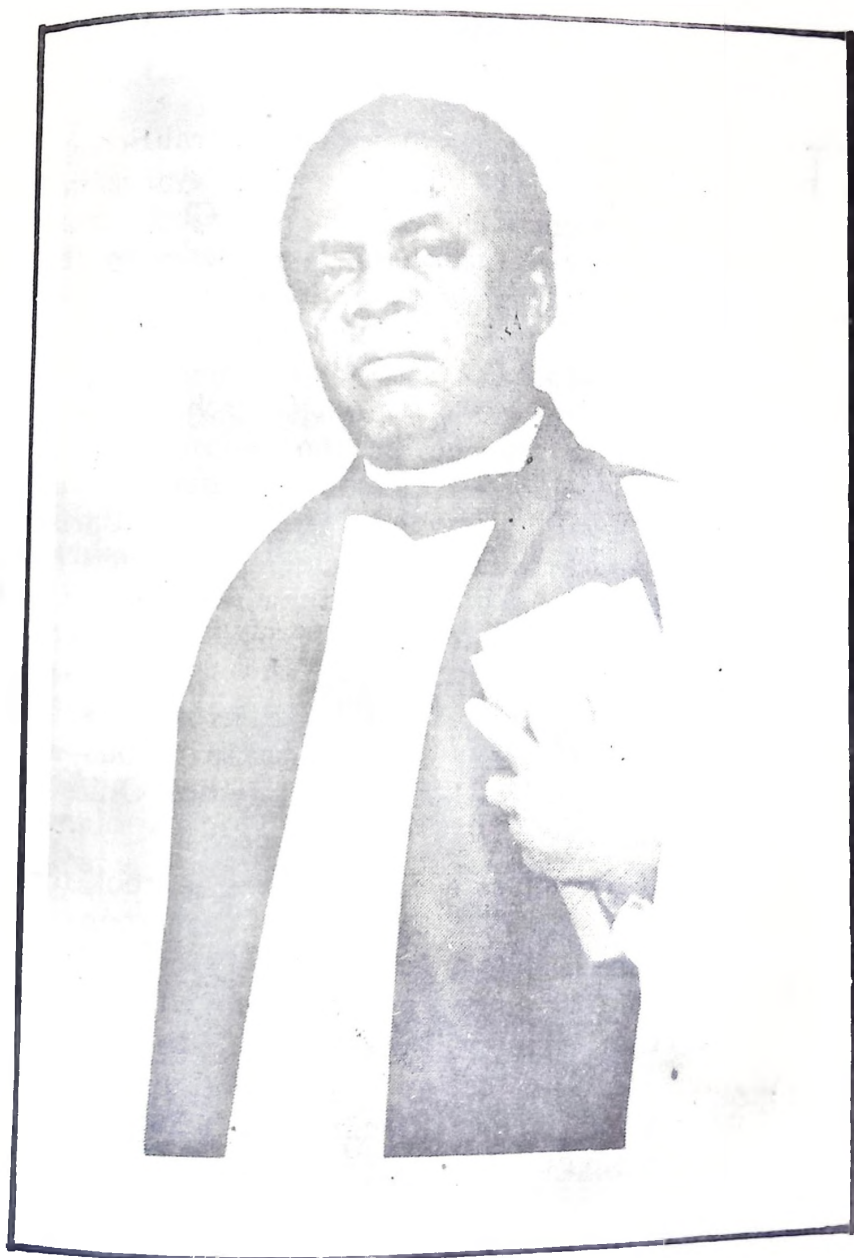
It was very difficult for the Igbo people to understand why these girls abandoned glorious marriage and child-bearing to choose a way of life that, to them, looked empty and devoid of all joy. So, many of them found consolation in coming to the conclusion that these girls were not beautiful enough to find men to marry them, and that they had got too old. It was easy for the people

to adhere to this conclusion, because these girls who turned their backs to the world had got educational qualifications that were the prerogative of men only in those days. They had also taught for some years and could have got married and borne children and established themselves as wealthy women. This step they took seemed, in fact, a great folly in the eyes of the people, and the people either pitied or cursed them.

The aspirants taught in the primary schools. They taught catechism in the churches, taught domestic science in the convent and visited the people in their homes. They also acted as interpreters to the Holy Sisters and the priests.

BY

SR. EUCHARIA ANYAEGBUNAM (IHM)



VEN. ARCH E.N. OBLANWU

THE VEN ERNEST NWABUEZE OBIANWU, D.Th

HE was born in 1920. He attended Central School, Onitsha. He lived as a versatile evangelistic missionary, since his entry as a worker with Christ from July 1950 when he was Licenced a Lay-Reader by the late Bishop A.C. Onyeabo, from St. Peters B.C.M. Onitsha. Thus accepting the call in Isaiah's Prophecy, "Here am I, Send Me." Consciously, he was given the first preaching assignment at Christ Church, Onitsha, he was expected to preach in Ibo before a large congregation of worshippers, including his parents. His late father Owelle Obianwu was Organist of Christ Church, Onitsha, who loved good music, from where he picked the trail as member of choir for many years. He had prayed ceaselessly for a day, when one of the offsprings of Obianwu will be priested. This sincere wish encouraged and inspired him to greater heights. It was not only this dream that came true, but an Archdeacon was born to Obianwu Family and Onitsha in general.

He identified himself as a catalyst when he took time off, during holidays in 1978 to visit the Cameroons at the instance of the Bishop on the Niger. The success of that evangelistic tour among the Christian community and Ibos in that country, yielded good dividends. Consequently in 1980, he as a Resident Ibo Priest vindicated the salt quality in him by his exemplary evangelistic mission to the Cameroons, as he endeared himself in the far north of Nigeria. It may be said of him, like Paul the Great Apostle, "Christ sent you not but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect," for the

preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to us which are saved, is the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:17—18).

Born to christian parents, he understudied Onitsha custom tradition under his father's tutelage. He was bell usher and bag carrier of Ndi Ichie Owelle Obianwu, and had the singular privilege to identify himself with what today is sacrosant to the Society. He took active part in the social cultural activities of his village group whenever he was around.

To say few words about Ernest and pinpoint some of his achievements may be a herculian task, because of many roles he played in character moulding. Born 58 years ago, he was married and had four children. He began his elementary education at Central School, Onitsha, and his secondary education at Hope Wadel Calabar. He taught for a brief period, little realising it was a beginning of a mission to be accomplished in life. He would not only teach, preach and baptise, but lived the gospel he preached. He joined the Army during World War II. He was not a leader in the Army as our potential leaders of today, but his leadership was destined to be, to lead the flock of Christ by his courage, strength wisdom and talent. He joined the Veterinary and again left for the Leventis, Kano, where he combined his activities as a leading member of the Choir with that of a Lay Reader. Here, Bishop Mort, the Diocesan Bishop of the North had no hesitation to spotlight and recommend his training for the ministry, at Immanuel College, Ibadan where he graduated with Diploma in theology 1964.

The catalogue of his evangelistic achievements read in part :—

- (a) Licenced Lay Reader in 1950 (32 years ago)
- (b) Ordained Deacon — 12th July, 1964
- (c) Ordained Priest — 15th March, 1965
- (d) Created Canon — 16th July, 1976
- (e) Consecrated Archdeacon — 4th April, 1982

He also served the Niger Diocese at B.C.M. Onitsha, St. Andrews, Onitsha, St. James Nanka, Immanuel Church, Adazi-Enu, etc.

He was much travelled, especially in Northern Nigeria. He was at Gusau at the beginning of the last civil war, from where he ran for dear life with his wife and was sheltered and clothed at Kaduna. He was there again, even further North.

He was the Archdeacon of Jos Archdeaconry but based at Yola. He built a magnificent church which was known as St. John's Anglican Church, Yola. He denied himself of owning a car because of the church building. He lived at Makurdi and Jos and was dearly loved by both Christians and non-Christians. His social calibre earned him an invaluable reputation which is worthy of emulation.

He died on Monday, May 4, 1987 at the age of 67 years.

By J.O. Onyejekwe



MR. DAVID OGBOGU

DAVID ELUEMUNO OGBOGU

DAVID Eluemuno Ogbogu was born at Ogbeozoma Village, Onitsha Town in 1912. He lost his parents quite early but depended on his uncles Mr. O. Ojekwe, Atuona, Chief Ibisi, the Osuma of Onitsha and the Christian leader Mr. Jeremiah C. Onwatu for sponsorship of his education. He attended the C.M.S. Central School, Onitsha, where he passed the Government Standard Six Examination in 1930. He then began his long career of teaching and continued until he was admitted into the C.M.S. Training College, Awka (now St. Paul's) in 1938. He had a most successful career in the college and was the "senior student" of his year. Notwithstanding his immense responsibilities with involvement in college administration, he came out successfully at the Higher Elementary Teachers' Examination in 1941. In due course he passed the Teachers' Grade I Certificate.

He taught in Onitsha Central School, and then distinguished himself as the Headmaster of the "Infants School". He joined the staff of St. Paul's College and from there proceeded to the Institute of Education, London, for the Professional Certificate.

On his return, his services were employed in diverse ways. At some stage he acted for the Principal of his Alma Mater, St. Paul's Awka, the Principal of Teachers' College Oleh in Bendel State, then he was appointed Principal of Elementary Teachers' College, Obosi, Principal of Elementary Teachers' College Nnewi, where he served for six years. His next station was Enugu Ngwo, where he was serving when he was approached for secondment to the Bible Society.

He was famous for his love of children. His record as an Infant Teacher stands singularly on its pinnacle alone. The mutual love between him and his pupils and

enfolded the teachers who worked with him has been life-long and unique in quality.

His love for the Church started quite early. Long before he was posted to the Awka College where the training was for serving in the church and church schools, he helped in church services regularly, reading prayers or the Bible lessons. It was a surprise that he was persuaded to move into the Bible Society. He gloried in the ecumenical approach of the Bible Society when the Bible society Auxilliary of Onitsha was inaugurated, it thrilled him very immensely that Archbishop Charles Heerey of the Roman Catholic Church and Archbishop C.J. Patterson of the Anglican Communion occupied the same platform. Year after year, late Bishop Okoye of the Roman Catholic Church, Enugu, and Bishop Otubelu of the Anglican Church, Enugu, led members of the society in open air services at the Enugu Stadium. He took his work as Area Secretary of the Bible Society as a personal challenge at which he must succeed regardless of lack of facilities and supporting staff. His activities were acclaimed by Dr. Ibiam, former Governor of Eastern Region of Nigeria.

He was a committed Scout, and doing a good turn became an articulate part of his life. His bewitching smile came from deep down his sincere heart. He was always concerned about others, always looking out for ways in which he could help. He would carry stools and benches rather than ask people to do so. He anticipated people's needs and would supply them even at great cost to himself.

He served in the N.U.T. and the mantle of leadership fell on him when his teacher, late Mr. R.S.N. Ekpunobi died in 1970, and he was elected the Chairman of N.U.T. East Central State. It is not an exaggeration to say that he was the architect of the Teachers' Manual that brought the revolution in conditions of service of

teachers. But he got nothing out of it. He could not be promoted because he had retired and he had no Udoji arrears nor had any scale of salary. He sweated night and day with the Secretary, Ministry of Education and the Commissioner for Education. He even brought over the National officers and other State officers of the N.U.T. to argue the case for teachers with the erstwhile Administrator, of East Central State, Mr. Ukpabi Asika. He gloried in the good fortune of teachers and none would guess that he did not profit by it.

When Archbishop Patterson wanted to found a Society of Friends of All Saints' Cathedral, he was asked to be the Secretary, because the essential qualities for a Society of friends were in him. He continued to function as the flag-bearer of the friends till the end of his life.

He was a devoted and beloved husband and father. He so loved his wife and children that he would rather wallow in pains for these beloved people of his.

He died on May 6, 1981 at the Age of 69.



LATE MR DAVID OSAKA

LATE MR. DAVID OBIKWE OSAKA

DAVID Obiekwe Osaka was born to Uduezue Osaka of Umuonogbo family of Onitsha on the 10th January, 1911.

He attended Central School Onitsha (1923 — 1929), where he obtained his First School Leaving Certificate. He proceeded for further studies at Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha 1930 — 1933 where he obtained his Cambridge School Certificate. In 1934 he passed his Hausa Colloquial language Exam and enlisted in Nigerian Regiment of the Royal West Africa Frontier Force on 17th April 1935. He served in the Army in Kaduna, Accra, Takoradi, Lagos until 31st December 1940, when he left the Army voluntarily.

He joined Onitsha Town Council on 20th September, 1943 as a clerk. In 1951, he was selected to attend Local Government interview training course at the University College Ibadan where he studied local government management.

In 1952, he proceeded to Cambridge University, United Kingdom where he did advanced Local Government Management course.

In 1953 he was appointed the Deputy Town Clerk for Onitsha and was later appointed the first market superintendent.

He combined the functions of the Town Clerk and the Market Superintendent thereby acting as the Chief Executive Officer of Onitsha Local Government. Between 1972 to 1976 he was appointed a member of Board of Onitsha Market Authority by the defunct East Central State Government.

MR. DAVID OBIKWE OSAKA was recalled on contract by the Anambra State Government as Higher Park Superintendent on the 1st December 1979, — The post which he held until his death on the 16th November 1982.

During the course of his career in the Local Government Service, he received many commendations for honesty exemplary character, dedication to duty from his Superior Officers including the former Prime Minister of Nigeria, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the former Colonial Governor of Eastern Nigeria, Sir Clement Pleass and the former Minister of Local Government, Mr. P.O. Nwoga.

He was the first member of Immanuel Church District to be elected to the Onitsha Archdeaconry Board in 1965.

As a Christian and Churchman, David made an indelible — a never to be forgotten mark for honesty and dedication to duty. For twenty five long and continuous years he steeped himself deep in the life and work of the Church — A member of the Parochial Committee; the revered Peoples Warden of Immanuel, who carried his office with such dignity, and candour that he brought respect and grace to the Institution. For 25 long and continuous years he was the “Chancellor of Exchequer” in Immanuel — guarding and husbanding the Church’s Finance with dexterity and care; determined with great concern that money lodged in his care grew rather than be expended, and he rendered his annual accounts with the expert’s skill; to the admiration and satisfaction of all.

As a person, D.O. — as he was fondly known - was simple, straight forward, warm, and very cheerful. He attended to duties punctually and devotedly. He drank

nothing, ate no kola nuts, but was usually warm and at home with those who enjoyed it all. He was free and happy to give one ones delight.

In May 1982 he celebrated a double feast — 25 years as Church Treasurer, and 40 years of happy married life with Margaret. Both ceremonies were commemorated in a Church Service, which also marked the dedication of the choir stall, terrazoed by him at very heavy expense.

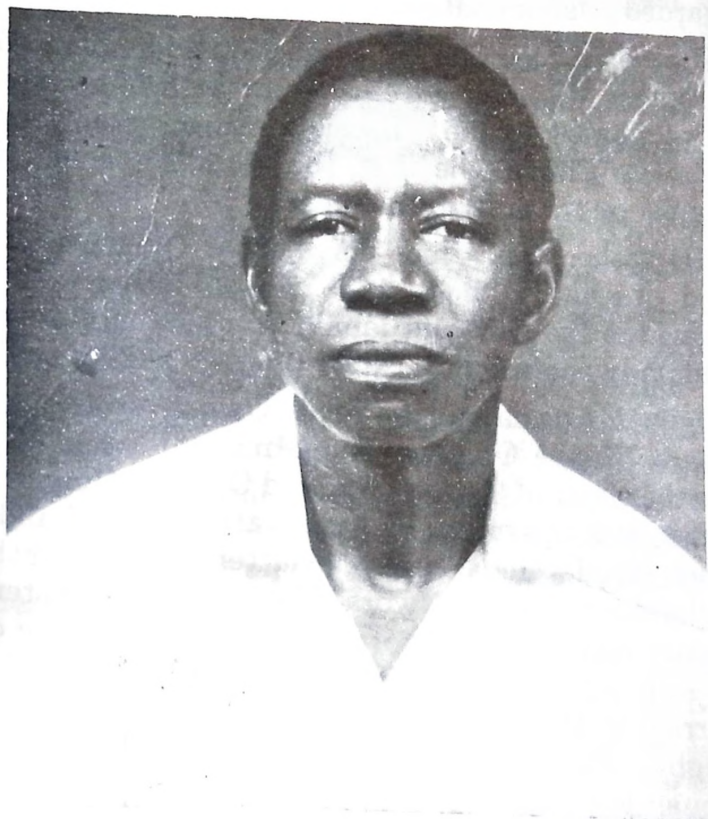
He was regarded as the encyclopaedia of Onitsha tradition and custom because he spent most of his life in Onitsha Inland Town.

He was so kind and friendly to people hence he voluntarily negotiated and purchased lands for any person who approached him. To this fact he provided residential quarters for those who without his help would not have got one. In spite of his multifarious duties, yet he used to spare time to supervise new buildings of his friends and relations.

On his delegation to the Onitsha Archdeaconry Board meeting held at St. Mathew's Anglican Church, Ozubulu in 1964 chairmanned by the Ven. Dr. B.C.E. Nwosu, he met Mr. Joseph O. Onyejekwe, Headmaster, Anglican Central School Ozubulu, who conferred with him, about the possibility of raising the Immanuel Church Parish to District Status. Mr. J.O. Onyejekwe paved the way as a missionary and then invited him for cordial discussion on the matter with the Archdeacon and the Synod Secretary. Finally the meeting was successful which formed the basis of further negotiations leading to the inauguration of Immanuel Church District, Onitsha, in 1965.

He had six sons and one daughter. He left no stone unturned to get all his children graduate in various fields of higher learning.

He sacrificed his life to the welfare of humanity and service of God.



MR. J. ONYISI ONYEJEKWE

HE was born on the 13th February, 1913. He was a twin. His brother's name was Chinyelugo William Idigo Chukwukelu Onyejekwe, a member of the prestigious Ozo Society of Onitsha. The time of his birth was at the age when delivery of twins was regarded as abomination.

Their existence was the protection engendered by the European Missionary Teachers at St. Monica's School Ugwuogba-Ogbunike, because their aunt Madam Egoayolo Chima, the first Ibo woman teacher, was a member on the staff of the school.

His father was Chief Onyejekwe Odiari, the Obol Boja of Onitsha born 1885 whose father was Chief Odiari the Ike-Akatakwuani of Onitsha and his mother Madam Iwenofu Odiari, Nne-Mmanwu nee Adazia.

Ogbuefi Adazia was the son of Osoma Nwasiali of Obi-Igboro Village Onitsha. Nne-Mmanwu Iwenofu Odiari was the sister of Ogbuefi Obi and Ogbuefi Umunna. The former was the father of Akunwata S.N. Obi and Enyi Janet Obodoechina, and the latter was the father of Archdeacon Victor Nwora Umunna. Her sister was Madam Ada the mother of Akunne Onuora whose one of the sons was Doctor Charles Onuora. Madam Ada later married to Mazi Ibegbu whose sons were Messrs Aaron Ibegbu, Jacob Ibegbu, and Timothy Ibegbu all of Umuasele Village, Onitsha.

Chief Onyejekwe Odiari, popularly known and called "Akunne Igwulu" had a brother Akunwata James Aniegboka Odiari and three sisters — Madam Kwuazu, the mother of Samuel Egbuniwe and Mr. Christopher Egbuniwe of Iyiawu Village, Madam Ekwutosi, the grand mother of Mr. Ikem Abadom and Mr. Oseloka Abadom of Ogbeodogwu Village and Enyi Mgboyibo Okwusogu the mother of Isaac Okwusogu and

Akunwata Ben Okwusogu. He had five sons and four daughters, namely, Akunne Robert Onyejekwe, Sir Joseph Onyisi Chukwuemeka Onyejekwe, Chinyelugo William Idigo Chukwukelu Onyejekwe, Akunwafor Patrick Orefo Chiemekauche Onyejekwe and Mr. Emmanuel Chukwuma Onyejekwe, Enyi Rosaline Kambili Chukwura, Madam Chineze Okolo, Mrs. Theresa Kwento and Mrs. Anyigegbu Ekweogwu. His brother Akunwata James Odiari, Alexander Odiari, Chinyelugo Anthony Odiari, Mr. Patrick Okechukwu Odiari and Mr. Ifeanyi Odiari, Madam Caroline Ekwuife Inoma and Madam Beatrice Ekwutosi Aghadiuno, Mrs. Muka Mora.

Mr. Joseph Onyisi Onyejekwe's Mother, Enyi (Nne-Mmanwu) Nwalie Ifedigbo Onyejekwe, was the daughter of Carpenter Abadom Emejulu, the Director of Works, C.M.S. Onitsha Industrial Mission, Onitsha Ozalla. He was trained overseas, he taught Mr. Nathaniel Ikegbunam Ifeka and Mr. Jacob Chukwura carpentry industry. Enyi Nwalie Onyejekwe hailed from Emejulu Family, the descendant of His Royal Highness Obi Omozele, the former OBI of Onitsha of Umuezearli Quarters, Onitsha, the King Makers of Umuezechima.

Her mother, Madam Mary Enwego Omekaobiedi Emejulu hailed from the family of Ejikeme of Nkpo-Uno. Her sister Madam Egoayolo Chima the mother of Mr. Timothy Benson Chima of Umuasele Village, was brought up educationally by Miss Alice Warner, the Principal of St. Monica's School, Ogbunike through Mr. (The Rt. Rev.) Alphonso Chukwuma Onyeabo her God-Father. After her training, she (Egoayolo) was employed and later joined the staff of St. Monica's School as a pupil teacher, hence she was the first Ibo woman teacher in Ibo land. Enyi Nwalie Onyejekwe was a keen trader in various food stuff items, kernel and oil. She was a

very good dancer and organiser. She died on Tuesday 9th November, 1976 at the prime age of 86 years. She was a staunch member of the prestigious OTU ODU Society of Onitsha, and Ositadinma Age Grade of Onitsha.

Mr. J. Onyejekwe, was brought up by the late Rt. Rev. Alphonso Chukwuma Onyeabo, the Assistant Bishop on the Old Niger Diocese, hence he did his early school training at St. Stephen's School, Onitsha. In 1924 he left for C.M.S. Central School, Onitsha to do standard one. In 1927 he left Onitsha for Lokoja where he finished his primary course in 1930 and taught for a year. He served as a houseboy, his cousin the late Timothy Benson Chima, a famous Organist and Church Lay Reader. He was a member of Anwuli Age Grade, Onitsha.

On Wednesday, 15th December, 1945 he was married to Miss Theresa Nwagboliase Onyebuari Ibegbu, daughter of Mr. Isaiah Ibegbu of Umuasele and Madam Jemimah Ibegbu (nee Okafo) of Ogbunike, at Immanuel Church, Onitsha by the Venerable Victor Nwora Umunna. The wedding ceremony was chairmanned by Sir. Louis Nwachukwu Mbanefo, Kt., M.A., L.L.B., C.F.R., B.L.

In 1946, he was appointed Headmaster of Central School, Amanzari in Owerri Archdeaconry. In 1950, he did the London Matriculation Examination successfully. In 1955, he attended a Rural Science Course, Umuahia where he was elected the Chief of the course. He passed the conducted examinations meritoriously and after two successive practical inspections of the School Rural Science Farm Work, was offered the Senior Teachers' Certificate in 1958.

In 1961, he was up-graded to Assistant Manager of District Schools and Chairman of N.U.T. He served in these capacities at Oba, Ozubulu, Igbo-Ukwu and

Onitsha Districts, before and after the Nigerian Civil War.

In 1973 he was up-graded to headmaster, Special class by the Ministry of Education, East Central State of Nigeria after the Government take over of Schools.

In 1974, he was appointed a supervisor of Schools. He retired from active service on the 31st August 1975.

In 1976, he took up appointment as the Headmaster of Y.W.C.A. Nursery School, Onitsha and in 1979 became the pioneer Headmaster of Immanuel Church Nursery School, Inland Town, Onitsha.

In 1967—70 he was a member of the Ibo Leaders of Thought with Chief I.A. Mbanefo, Odu II and Mr. David E. Ogbogu.

In 1967—68 he was the only Onitsha man responsible for collecting and conveying Onitsha shares of food stuffs to the Biafran Army.

In 1979, the Onitsha Local Government appointed him a member of the Adult Education Advisory Committee and Headmaster of the Adult Education School Unit, Onitsha.

On 31st October 1979, his wife Mrs. Theresa Nwagboliwe Onyejekwe died leaving three sons and four daughters. Her life was a monument of history .

In 1971, he was elected President of Onitsha Community Farmer's Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society Limited.

In 1973, he was the General Secretary of Onitsha Urban Divisional Co-operative Council Ltd., Onitsha.

In 1976 he was the Chairman of the Board of Directors and Executive member of the East Central State of Nigeria, Ministry of Trades and Co-operative.

In 1975—77 he was the Chairman of the Operation Feed the Nation (initiated by the Military Regime) and Onitsha Farmers' Council, Onitsha Agricultural Zone.

In 1978 he was appointed by the Rt. Rev. J.A. Onyemelukwe, the Diocesan Bishop, a member of the Board of Directors, Dayspring Girls Industrial and Social Centre, Onitsha.

In 1980, he was unanimously elevated to the high hierarchy of the Niger Diocese, the Onitsha Archdeaconry Treasurer, which by virtue of the office entitled him to attend the Archdeaconry and Diocesan Boards and Finance respectively and the Synod on the Niger. He was the first Onitsha man to hold the Office. He was a member of the Onitsha Archdeaconry Executive Committee and served in various top level Investigation Committees.

He was the Treasurer of Immanuel Church Building Committee 1971-78 Onitsha, whose Church dedication was performed in 1975.

He was the Honorary Secretary of Onitsha Progressive Union (O.P.U.) for more than twenty-five years.

In 1980 he spent the summer season in London, England.

He was elected the Hon. Secretary of the Entertainment Committee which spearheaded and made success of the visit of the Most Rev. and Right Honourable Robert Alexander Kennedy Runcie, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England Metropolitan on 23rd and 24th April 1982; where he distinguished himself a host-man to be reckoned with. It was his singular struggle that made the Archbishop of Canterbury visit the Obi Palace and the Council of Chiefs at Ime-Obi, Onitsha and he was honourably received by the Obi of Onitsha H.R.H. Igwe Okechukwu Ofala, after the appointed Plenary Committee had resolved negatively on the proposal.

In 1982 he represented the Niger Diocese in the Plenary Committee responsible for the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of Iyi-Enu Hospital, Ogidi.

In 1981, he was unanimously elected the Chairman, Onitsha Urban Lay Readers' Association.

In 1983, the Diocesan Board appointed him its representative to the Diocesan Council of Laity, where he was elected the Financial Secretary.

During his youthful days, he was a famous guitarist, choirmaster, footballer, an athlete, educationist and philanthropist.

By and large he was a self made man because he attained his educational peak by the sweat of his hands and thereafter known and called J.O.

In 1986, he was one of the three Anglican members who were holding dialogue with the members of Ndichie and ozo titled men for the reconciliation and marriage of traditional religion to christian religion among Onitsha indigenes.

As a philanthropist, he spent most of his time between 1978—1984, writing petitions to the Obi of Onitsha, Ndichies, Age Grades, Societies and individuals, suggesting ways and means of improving the culture, moral and livelihood of Onitsha people, and to make Onitsha retain her past glory.

In 1987, the Diocesan Board appointed him a member of the Diocesan Cultural Issues Committee, despite his membership to the Church District.

It was through his instrumentality and struggle in 1986 in handling the cultural issues of Igbu Odu and Iyi-Obi among christian women in Onitsha that the tangible problems facing them were resolved and the affected women re-admitted into full fledged membership of Anglican Church to receive the Holy Communion. By

this wonderful and successful determination, the members of the prestigious Igbu Odu Society of Onitsha - Ado held a high degree of esteem for him and made him their bossom friend.

He retired from active service as a teacher after 45 years of meritorious service.

He was highly blessed -with children, who are both disciplined and have love and sympathy for their parents. They, generally, left no stone unturned in seeing to the welfare of their parents.

They had never left them in want, hence, the parents served God and humanity with joy and enjoyed their old age in happiness and merriment.

He was the brain behind the success and progress of Umuokwuluonye Welfare Association, organised and formed by himself to co-ordinate and co-operate the whole members of Umuokwuluonye family of Odoje Village in Onitsha Town.

In Immanuel Church, Onitsha, he master-minded the formation of the Immanuel Church Christian Movement.

His prayer in life was that God would cast the mantle of the late Ven. Victor Nwora Umunna on him, which materialised in 1980 when he was appointed Onitsha Archdeaconry Treasurer.

As a man trained in agriculture, he devoted most of his time in setting up unforgettable example among his pupils, teachers and neighbouring people around his school by involving himself in practical and theoretical farming techniques. He made his own children work equally hard, even more than their counterparts. They grew with this attitude and it sincerely landed them to being dutiful.

In 1971 when the present Immanuel Church building was under reconstruction, he was elected Treasurer. Despite this

onerous task, he voluntarily committed himself to writing all appeals for donation in cash or kind throughout the period of five years' duration of the work.

He wrote and read the addresses on the occasions of the Laying of foundation stone 1972 and the dedication of the Church in 1975 by the Archbishop of the Province of West Africa, the Most Rev. C.J. Patterson D.D., M.A. The then Anglican School teachers in Immanuel Church contributed large sums of money with which they bought and donated the pulpit. He made them donate cabinet chairs individually for the chancel. Since then, his leadership qualities have become apparent.

His life has been a unique combination of certain attributes among them thoroughness, accountability, tolerance, adherence to principles, sincerity of purpose and inflexible pursuit of excellence. This character earned him the enviable post of being the Onitsha Archdeaconry Treasurer.

The following is summary of his activities in his professional teaching career.

In 1930, he obtained the primary class six certificate at the Holy Trinity C.M.S. School, Lokoja in the then Northern Nigeria, he took the first position in the Primary Six examination in the whole of Kabba Province, now known as Kwara State and was awarded a prize.

He taught in the school, assisting the Headmaster in Primary class six and at the time acting as the school monitor.

He left Lokoja for Onitsha at the end of the year with the intention of gaining admission into the Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha, but on arrival his parents handed him over to the Rev. (later Bishop) A.C. Onyeabo to train him for the ministry of God. He posted

him to the C.M.S. Central School, Ata in 1931 for a teaching career. In 1933 he was transferred to C.M.S. School, Anara in Okigwe area and in 1934 to C.M.S. Central School, Nkwerre in Orlu area now Imo State. In 1936 he was transferred to Nnobi and Amawbia in 1937. In 1938 he was posted to Sanubi in Warri area of Bendel State to man the C.M.S. School as the Head-teacher and the Catechist of the Church, yet that year, he was granted permission as the first untrained teacher in the history of the old Niger Diocese to prepare and take the Higher Elementary Teachers' Certificate Examination without going through St. Paul's C.M.S. College, Awka.

He was granted this option following the recommendation of the Supervisor of schools, the Rev. Canon C.O. Forster for his brilliant performance in the 1937 Common Entrance Examination into St. Paul's College Awka. He studied for the examination for two years and in 1939 passed it creditably. In 1940 he was transferred to Central School, Nkwo-Nnewi and thence to the C.M.S. Central School, Nnobi where he did his practical teaching and passed. In 1942 he entered St. Paul's College, Awka for four months practical teaching course. Leaving the college in April that year, he was posted to C.M.S. Central School, Nkwerre. In 1943 he acted as schoolmaster at the C.M.S. Central School, Ife in Mbaise, Owerri Province. At the end of the year, Rev. Victor Nwora Umunna asked for his transfer to Central School, Oba in 1944. In 1946 he was appointed the Headmaster of C.M.S. Central School Amauzari.

In 1949 he was transferred to Central School, Ahiara (1949—53). In 1954, he was posted to Afoigwe in Idemili Division. In 1955 he went to the Rural Agricultural Centre, Umudike Umuahia for one year Rural Education Science Course from Achina Central School. He did his post Rural Science practical farm work in 1956—58 at Mgbakwu School in Awka and Umunya School and

obtained the Senior Teachers' Certificate in 1958. He was transferred to Central School, Enuogwugwu-Ojoto 1959—61. Here he was promoted and appointed Lay Treasurer/Assistant Manager of District Schools, responsible for the payment of District teachers' salaries and equipment of Schools. In 1962 he was transferred to Ozubulu, 1965 to Igboekwu and 1967—70 Christ Church School, Onitsha on the same official capacity.

In 1971, the East Central State took over schools. He was posted to Lafiaji School in 1971—72 and in 1973 he was in the merged Obi Okosi (Girls') and the Rev. Anyaegbunam Memorial Primary Schools, Inland Town Onitsha, as Headmaster Special Class.

In 1974 he was appointed Senior Supervisor, Special duties attached to St. Charles' Teacher Training College, Onitsha, to educate the students on the proper methods and ways of handling different subjects in their practical teaching, preparatory to their final examination;

After his retirement, he took up appointment as Chief Inspector of New Bethel Adult Education Centre, Onitsha 1979—80 and Headmaster of Y.W.C.A. Nursery and Immanuel Church Nursery Schools, Onitsha respectively 1976—84.

It is gratifying to note that Mr. J. Onyejekwe was blessed with twin babies. He is a twin himself and had twins Joseph and Josephine. His first daughter, Ngozichukwuka, had three sets of twins.

He had three sons and five daughters namely, Mrs. Amaka Ngozika Ebubedike, Mr. David Okechukwu Onyejekwe, Mrs. Victoria Chibogwu Oboli, Mr. Chukwunweike Onyejekwe, Miss Josephine Chinazo Onyejekwe, Mr. Joseph Chukwuemeka Onyejekwe and Miss Eunice Ebelechukwu Onyejekwe. All are graduates in various fields. His wife died on Wednesday 31st October, 1979.



MR HERBERT ORANYE

HERBERT BOSAH ORANYE

THE great lawn tennis star and perfect gentleman Herbert Bosah Oranye was born on 29th August, 1917, to the late Stephen Oranye junior brother of well-known late Akunne Francis Oranye of the now famous Oranye Street and from the Ogbuaba Family of Umuasele Village, Onitsha.

He attended Central School, Onitsha, 1927—31; Awka Government School 1932—33; D.M.G.S., Onitsha 1934—37. He passed the Government Class 6 and Senior Cambridge Certificate examinations a real feat in those days.

He became staff of His Majesty's Custom and Excise, Lagos, in 1938 and in 1940 was posted to the Western preventive service at Idiroko during the second World War. On return to Lagos in 1942, he was posted to the Shipping Master's section to deal with the welfare of seamen.

In 1951 he was promoted Assistant Shipping Master and in 1958, he was sent to the UK on course of instructions, in 1962, he was promoted shipping Master and posted to Lagos.

As a boy, he represented Central School, Onitsha, in Empire Day sports specialising in Pole Vault and short distance races. In 1934—37, he represented D.M.G.S. IN sports.

In 1938, he joined the Marine Football Club in which the team held on unbroken record by winning all the 18 matches played in the season with only two goals against it. In a match against the famous Zik Football Club, he scored six goals and this singular feat was recorded in the popular Inside Stuff column and the editorial of erstwhile West African Pilot. In 1939—40 he represented Nigeria in football.

In lawn tennis for which Herbert is best known, he started playing tennis at Central School, Onitsha, just with bare palm of his hands and later used bats. In 1934—37, he represented D.M.G.S., Onitsha, and also won the championship organised in 1935 and 1936. He had the privilege of being coached by late Bishop Lasbery and Archbishop C.J. Patterson. In 1938 he played tennis as a reserve for Nigeria against Gold Coast now Ghana. In 1945 after the second World War, he began representing Nigeria in all intercolonial tennis tournaments. 1945—48, he played the finals of the Slazenger's Cup (Singles) only to be beaten by Europeans of those days. In 1949, he won the Slazenger's Cup thereby becoming the first Nigerian to capture the Cup. With Walter Obianwu also from Onitsha, he won the doubles of the Cup.

In 1952, he was awarded the Norwich Trophy Certificate as one of the best seven sportsmen in Nigeria. In 1952—60, he captained Nigeria International Team and was made the honorary coach to the Nigeria Tennis Association. In 1953—59, he became Secretary of the Tennis Association and through his influence the first professional coach, Major Grundley was engaged and he improved on his coaching efforts. While on overseas course of instructions for the Marine Department, he played tennis at Rovings Court and Battersea parks.

In 1961, when he was stationed in Port Harcourt to open the shipping Master's office, he captained the Eastern Nigeria tennis team to Lagos and won both the singles and doubles cups of the All Nigeria Championships. Patrick Obi was his partner in the doubles and he won the singles. That was the last time the Slazenger's (singles) and Double's Cups were played then giving way to the new cup known as All Nigeria Lawn Tennis Cups.

He won the singles cup in 1949, 1951, 1952, 1954.

He won the doubles with Obianwu in 1949 and 1951.

He won the Doubles with Ajayi in 1950 and 1954.

He won the Doubles with Nwabunor in 1957.

In 1960, he won the doubles with Obianwu.

With Patrick Obi, he won the doubles in 1961.

In 1964—65 he won the veteran Singles Cup and with V. Aneke won the Doubles.

After the civil war in 1970, he was among those who helped to revive the East Central State Sports Council and was made Vice President Lawn Tennis at Enugu. In 1971, when he was stationed, in Portharcourt, he became the Veteran's Singles Champion. In 1972, he retired from service and on his return to Onitsha became a member of the Recreation Club and helped in coaching. In 1974, he was engaged as a Lawn Tennis Coach by the East Central State Sports Council and posted to Onitsha. In 1975, he was honoured with four other sportsmen (one of whom was former Justice Moses Balonwu and Lawrence Ogbuah) by the East Central State Sports Council.

In 1978, he donated a silver cup to the Onitsha Sports Council for competitions in Lawn Tennis by all the colleges in Onitsha. The cup was first won by one Edwin Chukwurah of D.M.G.S., Onitsha. In the same year 1978 he was invited by the Kwara State Sports Council during their second Lawn Tennis Championships at Ilorin.

In 1981, he helped organise the first open tennis championship in Onitsha, under the Sports Council. In 1984/85 helped by Tony Dove another coach of the Anambra Sports Council, he coached the following young men who went overseas on different tennis scholarships representing Nigeria:— Edwin Chukwurah, Innocent Modika and Obidiegwu.

In 1986, he was honoured by the Anambra Sports Council during the 1st Premier Hard Court Lawn Tennis

Championships at Enugu. 1987, he received the biggest honour during the 1st National Sports Awards for Heroes and Heroines of yesteryears by the Federal Military Government in Lagos.

In draughts he is Draughts Champion of the Recreation Club Onitsha from 1974—86. In billiards he won for four years running the billiards Championships of the Onitsha Recreation Club.

Gentleman Herbert Oranye is married to late Elizabeth with three surviving children.

- i. Ikem Oranye a chartered quantity surveyor stationed at Kaduna and a very keen tennis player.
- ii. Dr. Amaka Obadeyi (nee Oranye) married and at present with the husband also a doctor both doing specialist courses in the U.K.
- iii. Chuka Oranye, an undergraduate of the Anambra State University of Technology Enugu, doing co-operative studies. He is a keen tennis player and has won laurels in Anambra State.



MATRON GRACE IFEKA

IT is not often nowadays one sees or hears of people who have devoted nearly half a century of their working lives to the service of mankind in any capacity. It was rather curious therefore, to find the retired Chief Matron Grace Ifeka who had invested as long as 48 years of her life to dedicated service in the nursing profession. She is now duly retired, but won't give up what she has been so used to all these years.

She is currently engrossed in an effort to set up a home for nursing practice as soon as she can muster the funds. For her, nursing has become second nature. It is in fact, as if she is wedded to the profession itself. Would it were possible to join her in the celebration of the golden jubilee of her wedlock to nursing. It sounds almost incredible and yet so very true.

Smiling and quite hearty in her reminiscences, the retired matron from Iyi-Enu hospital, located some eight kilometres east of Onitsha along Onitsha-Enugu trunk 'A' road took me on an excursion in her narrative down the memory lane, through the tunnel of time and pages of history as she recalled past events so vividly, as though they only happened yesterday.

But how come, the blistering touches of age have left no considerable tell-tale evidence on her given the toil and moil in a rather demanding profession at the maturing age of 69, I asked myself silently.

Perhaps, I wondered too, the wreckage with age may not after all be what we think it is — the havoc wrought by hard work. It may well have to do with the mind rather than precipitate an effect on the physical matter. And that explains why the buffers of labour have done little to dent her beautiful frame and matronly rectitude.

In the days past, it used to be said that honour should be given to whom it is due, but I wonder, if in these days of smoke and vapour, of sound and fury and of displaced values when virtually everything is measured in terms of naira and kobo whether we still appreciate merit in service. Be that as it may, service is the thing, especially the type rendered with a quiet dignity without so much of the din of loud noises, by which the vain seek to attract attention to themselves and thus bring their faces to market.

No doubt, the benefit we seem to reap and squander today were piled up through the cumulative effort of those like this lady, who were motivated to serve their country and humanity at large.

Miss Grace Chukwunazom Ifeka was the eldest of seven children born in 1917, into an Ogboli Eke family of Onitsha, of late Mr. Nathaniel Ifeka, alias Ifeyiuka, a professional carpenter trained at Onitsha Industrial Mission. Her mother was Christiana N. Ifeka.

After obtaining her first school leaving certificate in 1936, Miss Ifeka read for and obtained the Grade II Midwifery certificate in June, 1938, the Nigerian Registered Nurse Certificate in January 1943 and State Certified Mid-wife Certificate in London in September, 1951.

Her early training and zest for the profession equipped her for the challenges she was destined to face in her pioneering role as the first Nigerian staff nurse/midwife, the first nursing sister and the first Nigerian matron and subsequently chief Matron at Iyi-Enu Hospital.

As a staff nurse and midwife, Miss Ifeka served at the Igbodu maternity centre, Warri, the Iyi-Enu General Hospital and the Egbu Owerri Maternity Home.

On her return from England after her one year post-qualification service in London, Miss Ifeka was first appointed as the assistant nursing sister at the Iyi-Enu Hospital and then as the nursing sister in charge of Nnewi (Akwa-Udo) Maternity Training Centre at Otolu.

With her vast training and background, Miss Ifeka came in readily to hand, to help out with the training of nurses which was so necessary then. She took up the training of mid-wives, the first set of which obtained impressive results.

Out of an intake of eighteen trainees, nine obtained distinctions, four chalked up credits and five made passes, making them eligible to pursue Grade I Midwifery Course.

This role she played for ten years. She later lectured at the Grade I Midwives Training Centre at Nnewi for eleven years, after which assignment Matron Jewitt charged her with visiting thirty-six maternity homes as Sister Supervisor within a jurisdiction that then extended to the then Rivers Province, the Midwest and the Eastern Region.

She was later recalled to Iyi-Enu as administrative sister in which capacity she also prepared nursing students for their examinations.

In the colonial days, professionals didn't just as easily ride the crest of the waves. Although, one's career was well mapped out ahead of one, one still needed to show ample evidence under tutelage that one possessed, the necessary level of competence without any shadow of doubts.

So, although, the retired matron joined the ranks of nursing sisters in the 50s and was stretched to her elastic limits in various professional deployments, it was not until 1966, she was promoted to the position of senior nursing sister.

Although, it is difficult nowadays, when people shuttle through the ranks so cheaply to the commanding heights, to appreciate what thorough apprenticeship meant to professional men and women, it is at least possible, comparatively speaking, to tell what difference is there between sleep and death. Those were the days when well-equipped professionals almost out of instinct, functioned with the aplomb of seasoned performers and offered solutions from their finger tips as though they were oracles, as opposed to the bluff style and the coasting habit in our time, when many men and women of big titles sound hollow — fidgeting, tottering and faltering in every step when called upon to show their mettle.

It seems a mystery though, that amid a surfeit of competent hands, we still experience in virtually every sector and every department of state some shortage of capable handlers.

In 1968, Miss Ifeka was called upon to stand in for a matron, who did not return on leave during the civil war.

All through the war, Miss Ifeka worked at Iyi-Enu later Oraukwu and Okija, both of which she ran simultaneously with Kwashiokor Clinic. But it was after the war, that her faith in both her profession and Iyi-Enu as a Hospital was greatly tested. The entire hospital premises had been overgrown by weeds, its buildings dilapidated and badly damaged with the ravages of war.

Return to Iyi-Enu was then strongly advised against, but Miss Ifeka's spirit knew no peace, until her cradle in the profession was returned to its old glory.

Then it was, she earned the title of the Tower of Strength of Iyi-Enu Hospital.

It is indeed, by calling back life from the abyss that her true greatness can be judged.

She was promoted matron Grade I in 1970, Senior Matron in 1978 and Chief Matron in 1982, a post from which she resigned in December 1984, having been there in active service for 47 years 8 months and 3 weeks.

In her long career, Miss Ifeka periodically earned various awards in recognition of her services and contribution to the profession. The Board of Governors of Iyi-Enu hospital in May 1960 gave her a prize and a certificate of appreciation for her 25 years of meritorious service.

In June of the same year, she bagged a certificate of honour and was decorated with a bronze medal by Queen Elizabeth II under the colonial administration.

Eighteen years after, Miss Ifeka again attracted the attention of the board of governors of Iyi-Enu Hospital who this time offered her certificate of merit in appreciation of her 41 years of faithful service in 1978.

Again, in 1981, she was invested with a national honours award by the President of the Republic as Member of the Order of the Niger (MON).

Asked why she persisted in her service with Iyi-Enu Hospital whereas she would have been better remunerated in a government established hospital rather than a missionary one Miss Ifeka spoke of her perception of the nursing profession as a vocation which she cherished more for its ideal of service than the material rewards.

Again, she disclosed that her father who was deeply religious in his days advised her against leaving the missionary establishment, the memory of which always informed her decisions.

"Having watched the nursing profession grow in all your years of service, what view do you now hold of it?" I asked.

The matron said she was proud of the profession which she said needed zeal and a great sense of sympathy. "You must be kind to your patients, tolerant, humble and devoted among other things," she said, According to Miss Ifeka, it is not the type of job you do with an eye on the closing hour or a feeling of: "It is time for me to go off".

Although, there are some difficult patients who seem, so because of ill-health the matron said, "you must be understanding in tending them, give them recommended medicines" she advised.

A woman in labour needs kind words and a midwife need not be rude to her, but devise a good method of approach. They need encouragement prompt attention and well-taken care of.

"Unfortunately," she remarked, "there are some who come to the nursing profession without that sense of devotion to duty, but more for the prospects of earning salaries. These are those who are impatient, intolerant and anxiously await the closing hour. But from my personal experience, mission hospitals come closest to the ideals of nursing practice."

Listening to the matron up to a stage was as if I was attending a tutorial on the ethics and moral philosophy of the nursing profession. But what more could one expect of the matron, who had lived her profession for years.

What does she intend to do, I tried to find out. "I shall continue working and keep offering professional advice to those who need it, I am not yet tired, she assured me "As soon as I can fit together a nursing home, I shall be fully back to practice" she promised.

Does matron have any regrets? None whatsoever about the nursing profession she said with a deep sense of contentment. "But the only regret for working in a

voluntary, agency hospital is failure to have pension and gratuity unlike our counterparts in the government hospitals.

"Before the government take over of mission schools," she pointed out, "the teachers were on government pension and gratuity. Why are those working in voluntary agency hospitals not considered as they are offering no less service to the nation" she asked.

In a hospital like Iyi-Enu, what is provided as gratuity is 6 months salary one year salary one and a half years salary and 2 years salary according to one's years of service which is very meagre compared with what the government worker is entitled to get.

As a wish in the interest of her cherished profession, the chief matron said, "It will be gratifying and encouraging if the government will compensate those already retired from the mission hospitals by giving them pensions and gratuity for their many years of service to the nation and to consider giving pensions and gratuity to all nurses and midwives working in voluntary agency hospitals.

As a background to the origin and development of Iyi-Enu hospital, it started as a dispensary at Ozala in Onitsha in 1907 to its present state of development at Iyi-Enu. As the first hospital in Igbo land, it pioneered many important medical programmes, some of which include, material and child care in which it dominated the scene for over 60 years in the eastern part of the country eradication of yaws, establishment of village maternity homes which developed into the Niger Diocesan Maternity Services (DMS): travelling doctor service and systematic treatment of leprosy which led to the establishment of a leprosy settlement at Oji River.

As a training school, it was the first hospital in Nigeria to graduate midwives and was one of the earliest to start the training of nurses. At present, the hospital trains both nurses and midwives and runs postgraduate programme for the training of doctors for the specialist qualification in medical practice (FMCGP) for which the hospital was the first to be recognised in Nigeria. It has since 1970, extended its services to include rural and urban health programmes.

BY: ACHIKE CHUKS OKAFO



HON. F.C.O. EMODI

HON. CHINYELUGO FLORENCE C. EMODI

WHEN it is realised that some developed and so-called civilized countries like France, gave women the franchise of voting into Parliament less than a century ago even though they have been independent over two hundred years ago, then it would be appreciated that Nigeria has not done badly in having women legislators soon after independence in 1960. We recall with pride and gratification such women activists and legislators like Wurola Esan in the Western House of Assembly at Ibadan and Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and Mrs. Janet Mokelu in the former Eastern House of Assembly at Enugu.

Following in their footsteps Hon. Chinyelugo Florence C. Emodi made history in 1979 by being the only woman member in the Anambra State House of Assembly. She served creditably her constituency of Onitsha North West under the defunct Nigerian Peoples Party from 1979 to 1983.

It is worth mentioning that she got into politics not because she was interested but as a result of the inability of the popular political party of the day to find a qualified member to contest the election in her constituency of Onitsha North West. Although there were three men vieing for the post she won by a wide margin thereby causing the men to lose their deposits.

She was at first surprised and possibly embarrassed to find that she was the only female member of a House of eighty seven. With time she got used to the situation and started enjoying it. She earned the respect of her male colleagues in the House. She served in four committees and was the Vice Chairman of the House Committee, the main assignment of which was the welfare of the members and staff of the House of Assembly.

Hon. Florence C. Emodi was born 68 years ago of Umunwezi sub family of Umuosuma in Ogboli Eke Village Onitsha. She is the only girl in a family of four boys. She attended St. Mary's Catholic School Lagos, Government School Bamenda in Cameroons. She later attended Holy Rosary Training College Onitsha, the only institution for secondary education for girls in her own time.

Having qualified as a teacher and teaching for some years, she obtained the Teachers' Professional Certificate of Education the equivalent of Diploma for Education in the Institute of Education University of London.

She was a classroom teacher cum headmistress of primary schools for twelve years, adult education organiser for women for four years, teacher of home economics for seven years, inspector of education in old Owerri province, Enugu and Onitsha Divisions and retired after 37 years of meritorious service.

As a legislator she was one of the female members in the State and National Assemblies selected to represent Nigeria in U.S.A. on the ticket of International Communication Agency in 1981.

Madam F.C. Emodi is a life member of the National Council of Women Societies of Nigeria; President-General of Holy Rosary College Old Girls Association (her alma mater); 1st Vice President of Odu Society of Onitsha Ado.

Her hobby is voluntary work besides reading and gardening.



MRS JUSTINA ANAZONWU — BELLO

MRS. JUSTINA N. ANAZONWU-BELLO

It was a Roman historian that once wrote that "lucky is a woman whose name is mentioned in history". This handicapped situation in history has not changed much until recently when the role and contributions of women have come to be tolerated and later accepted even if grudgingly by a male dominated world. Despite this prejudice to women, history has nevertheless recorded the role of women who have carved a curious niche for themselves in the history of the civilized world. They have swerved between the cultivation of their traditional seductive femininity in order to achieve their ends and the adoption of mannish characteristics.

From Cleopatra and Boadecia in the ancient world to Thatcher in the modern, from Mary Queen of Scots to Mrs Indira Ghandi and in our own Nigeria from Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti to Professor Ogunseye the celebrated librarian and Grace Obayi the Education Commissioner in Anambra State, women have held their own even if they have to struggle against patriarchal assumptions.

In recent times, the Rotary Club of Onitsha East decided to honour a woman, a Nigerian, who through her chosen vocation has attained high ethical standards in her business and profession as an expert in nutritional science. This is so because in Rotary International's second avenue of service which they call vocational service, Rotary recognises the worthiness of all useful occupations as an opportunity to serve society.

This Nigerian woman is no other than Mrs. Justina N. Anazonwu-Bello, who was born 65 years ago in 1922 in Kaduna by late Madam Anna Ukecha Ezinoh of Okpanam and Joseph Agulefo Anazonwu, son of Obi Anazonwu I (1874-1899) the 16th Obi of Onitsha. It would be recalled that Obi Anazonwu who died in 1899

concluded Trade treaties with Her Britannic Majesty's Acting Consul and the National Africa Company Limited in the present of Omu or Queen Nwagboka I of Onitsha, 63 Chiefs and 43 land owners in 1877. The famous Holy Trinity Primary School, Onitsha had since been renamed Obi Anazonwu Primary School.

Her historic background notwithstanding, Justina was determined not only to carve a niche for herself in her chosen vocation of teaching and nutritional service but, prepared herself early enough in life for the vocation ahead of her. After her elementary education at Lagos and Kaduna she went through Saint Agnes Teacher's Training College, Yaba and Saint Theresa's Girls High School, Lagos, before going to Bristol University College of Education in 1951 and doing her post graduate course at Ohio University Athens United States of America.

Her experience covers such areas as education officer, Women Training College, Uyo in 1954 - 57, Principal Women Occupational Training Centre Aba now Government Trade Centre Aba, Senior Inspector of Education, Enugu. 1963 - 66, Head, Department of Home Economics Advanced Teachers Training College (A.T.T.C.) Owerri now Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri. Principal Inspector of Education, Ministry of Education, Co-ordinator, Food Investigation Project of the Ministry of Agriculture and National Resources, Enugu, 1971 - 79. Between 1982 -86 she was consultant Indigenous Food Development of Federal Ministry of Science/Technology PRODA), Enugu.

Besides being Chief Examiner in Home Economics and organiser of seminars, workshops and conferences on Home Economics, Food Science/Technology Arts

and Culture at state and national levels, she has represented Nigeria at World conference on cereals at Winnipeg Minnesota Canada. No wonder she received an award from the National Academy of Sciences from Washington D.C. United States of America.

Her membership of professional and scientific societies are varied and extensive. She is an executive member of Nigeria Education Research Council, one time Counsellor of Nutrition Society of Nigeria, ex-President of Home Economics Teachers' Association of Nigeria, member International Associate of the American Home Economics Association and member National Academy of Sciences Washington D.C. United States of America.

Justina is a life member of National Council of Women Societies member Girls Guide Association and executive member of Centre for Applied Religion and Education (CARE).

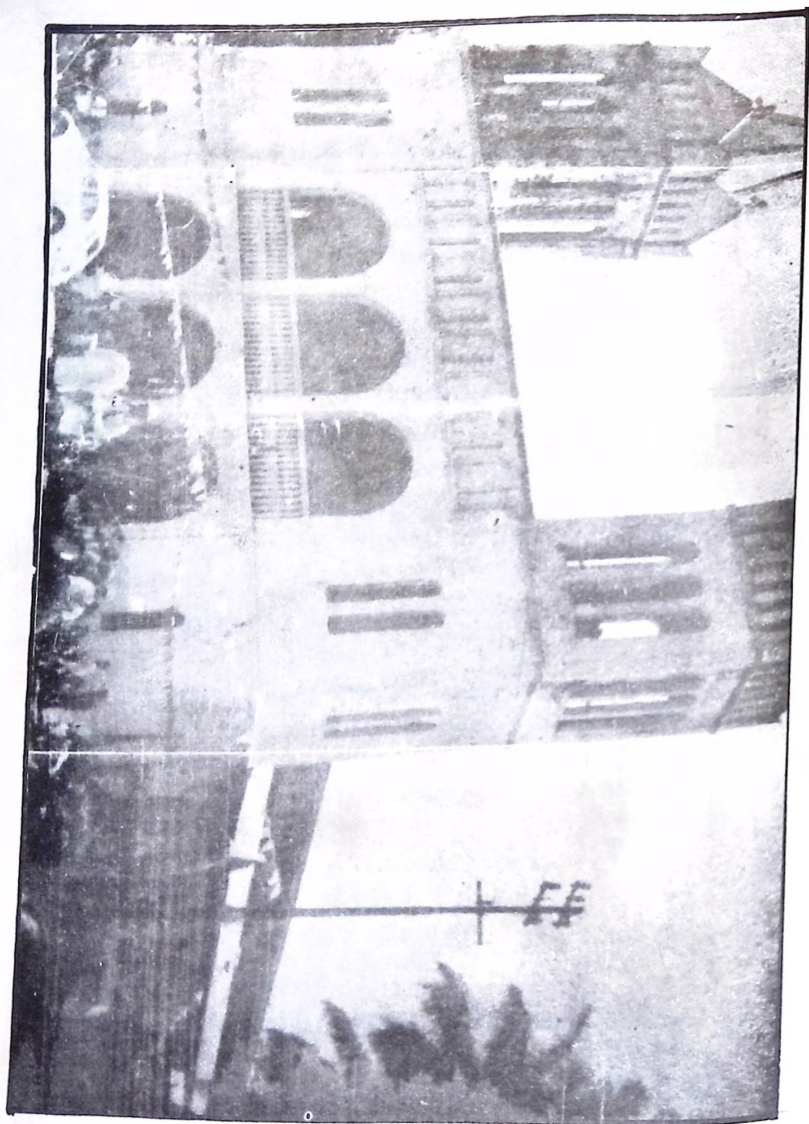
Her publications include:

- i. Nutritive Value of Local Food Stuffs
 - ii. The Home Scientist (all textbooks)
- Research Publications**
- iii. Leaf Protein Concentrate in Human Nutrition
 - iv. Soya Bean in National Diet
 - v. Food Investigation Project
 - vi. Local Flours in Bakery

Publications

- i. Food and Nutrition in Practice (Macmillan 1976)
- ii. Home Economics for Nigeria Secondary Schools Co-author
- iii. Cassava Products and Recipes
- iv. Nigerian Corn Recipes 1983

- v. African Dishes in Modern Food Service
1986
- vi. Tinaze Baby Foods



**St. Mary's Catholic Church, Onitsha where
Msgr. worked for 28 years. He was buried
in front of this Church by the left entrance.**

PROFESSOR BEN ENWEONWU

PROFESSOR Benedict Chuka Enweonwu renowned sculptor and artist was born in 1921 of the Enweonwu family of Umuezeoroli of Onitsha. He attended Government College, Ibadan, Government College Umuahia, Goldsmith College, London, University of Oxford and University of London England.

A former cultural adviser to the Federal Government, Ben Enweonwu was a visiting professor of African studies at the Howard University Washington D.C. U.S.A. before he was appointed professor of fine arts at the Obafemi Awolowo Univeristy, Ile-Ife. Member of the Order of the British Empire, Professor Enweonwu's art exhibition were held 1948 at Gallerie Appolinaire, New York Boston and Washington D.C. U.S.A.

He is a member of the prestigious Agbalanze Society of Onitsha.

It will be recalled that Professor Enweonwu had the singular honour of sculpturing. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain who sat for him a number of times in Buckingham Palace. The Queen's sculpture adorning the entrance to the House of the Representative Enweonwu also did a sculpture of Zik when he was Premier of Eastern Nigeria. It stands at D.M.G.S. Round-about, Onitsha and the two other statues of Zik in the old Eastern House of Assembly, Enugu and the New House of Assembly at Independence Layout, Enugu. His fourth sculpture of Zik is in front of INOSI-ONIRA residence of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe on the Onitsha, Enugu Express Way. Two other works of Ben Enweonwu include the Goddess of Thunder SANGO at NEPA Head Office Marina Lagos and ANYANWU the Sun goddess at the National Maseum Lagos.



EMERITUS PROF. CHIKE OBI

EMERITUS PROFESSOR CHIKE OBI:
A MAN OF NUMBERS AND POLITICS

THEY call him father and grandfather of many mathematicians. To some of his fanatical supporters his name is synonymous with mathematical genius, a star that shines brighter than the sun. Thus, when some of his students call him the modern day Calculus, it is not for the fun of it, for the great teacher happens to be the first and one of the most brilliant mathematicians that Nigeria has ever produced.

Scientists both at home and abroad share that adulation, for Chike Obi, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Lagos, is a renowned mathematical scientist who shares a common strand of intellectualism with mathematical legends like Galileo. Archimedes, Descartes, Russell, Grossmann and Riemann. Obi's own contribution to the world of knowledge is in the realm of motion, and his area of specialisation includes Non-Linear Differential Equations, Differential Equations and Analytical Dynamics, and Mathematical Analysis and Application.

These mathematical concepts may be baffling or esoteric to non-mathematicians but they are Obi's onions, which are duly acknowledged within academic circles. Because he has reached the mandatory age of 65 in 1986, the great mathematician retired from active teaching at the end of the academic session of that year.

Meeting Obi in old age was rather like being confronted by an angry youngman who is bitter over a system that is literally sending him into a world of celibacy when he is still as active as a stallion. Obi's mathematical virility is not in doubt in the eyes of his colleagues and admirers, but the law insists on playing its numbers.

On October 7, 1986 Chike Obi took the final bow and quit the classrooms and there goes an academic giant who towers both in physique and intellect above his contemporaries: a professor who still yearns for greater contributions in the noble profession of teaching; a man of the people who combines academics with his concern for humanity.

For those who know him in his heydays, Obi is a fighter who does not give in easily once he believes in something. His colleagues in the university also attest to this fact, that on a matter of principle Obi is ready to defend his standpoint to the last. His retirement is not an exception. He is retiring but not without some form of protest. He says the retirement of academics on the ground of old age is bad, especially in a situation where there are not enough people to man the various departments in Nigerian universities.

Thus, he is bitter with the law that sets the mandatory retirement age at 65. He calls it a "colonial legacy" which does not take into account the disparities between and ageing European and his African counterpart. Obi's postulation is that Africans are known to mature later than Europeans both physically and mentally. He is of the view that one becomes a better counsellor as one advances in age. Given the statutory chance, Obi is prepared to wrestle with mathematics until "death doth them part," for he believes much in his mental capacity and a willing mind that wants to produce more. He says he is ready to continue teaching until he dies.

Obi's vehement protest over the retirement age for public officers and academics is not unexpected. He has always been known as a controversial figure both in politics and in his academic pursuit. His tempestuous spirit once drove him away from the classroom into the

open arena of politics where he raised a lot of dust. He was once a member of the defunct NCNC but the rebel in him led him out of the party. On the eve of his departure, he tried to gatecrash into the party's convention at the **Empire Hotel**, Idi-Oro, Mushin, but was ordered to be ejected by the presiding chairman, the late Michael Okpara.

In the process the NCNC threw away both the bathwater and the rebellious baby that Obi constituted to it. He then found his own party, the dynamic Party of Nigeria. He recalled later in an interview with "Newswatch" that the sole aim of forming the party was to get political power and bring about scientific and technological revolution. It was apparent that Obi and his political colleagues were operating on two different wavelengths.

He was later to team up with the Action Group led by Obafemi Awolowo, but his political eldorado was not in the horizon. He also flirted with the Nigerian National Alliance in his search for birds of the same political feather. Finally, he made the rounds and came back home to roost with his Dynamic Party which was eventually banned along with other political parties in the wake of the military rule in 1966.

Obi, the mathematician, is often accused of confusing the intricacies of mathematics with the complexities of politics. To some of his critics he is given to turning every situation to mathematical equations. They may be right to some extent. Obi truly extended his mathematical equations beyond the classroom situation to real partisan political environments, but he ran into some turbulent storm when out of the academic community where freedom was total.

He was often accused of pretending not to know that politics is more complex than chemical reaction or mathematical equation. In an explosive political

situation that Nigeria was often blessed with, Obi, the Nigerian version of Galileo, forgot that "X" is the unknown factor in political equation. Very ironical indeed that Obi refused to play the "X" game. He was too frank, too honest and too impatient to be a good politician.

To him, as far as politics is concerned, there is nothing like the unknown factor. In the beginning he wanted a revolution in any form to effect a change in the status quo. He was not equivocal about it. For Obi the art of double talk should be left to actors on stage. In real life situations, whether one is a politician or a mathematician, double talk is taboo. Thus, he calls a spade by its common name, not caring whose ox is gored.

In all the circumstances of the case therefore, and having regard in particular to the position of accused in the community and the fact that he enjoys an unblemished character I have come to the conclusion that a fine will be the appropriate punishment in this case. I sentence the accused to pay a fine of £100 or to go to prison for 3 months I.H.L. in default of payment."

One of his favourite quotations is this from Max Born:

"The belief that there is only one truth and that one self is in possession of it seems to me the deepest root of all that is evil in the world."

Political Detention:

- (a) September 19—30, 1961 — by the Administrator of Western Nigeria..
- (b) October 1, 1961 — March 31, 1962 — Police and Court detention for Treasonable Felony and Conspiracy.
- (c) February 6, 1968 — January 13, 1970 — during the

civil war. This was due in part to his not hiding his annoyance over Ojukwu's blundering of his Midwest plan to shorten the civil war: The plan was as follows: Biafran troops were (a) to move into the Midwest and within 24 hours establish the Republic of Benin headed by an Edo man;

(b) to move across the Niger at Aganebode and Lokoja and build up a threat behind the Federal troops threatening Nsukka. Chike Obi calculated that the Federal troops would immediately withdraw to Markurdi. With the threat to Enugu thus eliminated, the Biafran Government was to announce its willingness to rejoin Nigeria provided that the lives of its citizens were guaranteed, and that the Republic of Benin could join Biafra in a common destiny or rejoin Nigeria. He calculated that by combining these military and diplomatic moves, the war would be brought to an end to the mutual advantage of all Nigerians.

- (d) February 1970 — March — by the 3rd Marine Commando.
- (e) April 1977 — detained by N.S.O. for a New Breed Magazine publication.

Popularly known as:

Chike Obi	—	HAKIKA
Chike Obi	—	ALAGBARA
Chike Obi	—	OKUNAGBA-OZALA
Chike Obi	—	KANTAMATO
Chike Obi	—	MATHEMATICS etc.

The great Abraham Lincoln, who saved the United States of America from breaking up, said during the American Civil War: "My sole AIM is to preserve the

Union. If I can do so by freeing some slaves and not freeing some I will do so. If I can do so by freeing all the slaves I will do so. My sole AIM is to preserve the Union."

Chike Obi, in stating his sole AIM borrows from Lincoln and says "My sole AIM is to bring about a Scientific Technological Revolution in Nigeria. If I can do this without being Head of State or Head of Government I will do so. If I can do this only by becoming Head of State of Government I will do so. Being Head of State or of Government, if I must be one, is just a necessary tool to achieve my sole AIM of bringing about a scientific technological revolution in the Fatherland."

BY DELE OMOTUNDE



MADAM OBIAMAKA ONOLI

MADAM OBIAMAKA ONOLI

IN every age and community a leader springs up either by acclamation; election or sheer force of circumstance if the leadership is seen to lead its acceptance becomes an accomplished fact.

For sometime in Onitsha, efforts to stop squandermania associated with traditional burial became an onerous and unaccomplished task for Obi and Council. Despite obvious economic depression in the country, most Onitsha people in their ostentation would prefer to go borrowing in order to give so called befitting honour to their departed dear relations. In spite of fines say N200.00 or so which the Obi and Council ordered offenders, most defaulters would rather pay the fines than obey the rules or conform with reasonable expenditure.

The populace did not like this state of affairs in which their kith and kin were impoverishing themselves by unnecessary over-spending which defied control.

Like a thunder from the blue, Ikporo (Women) Onitsha under the leadership of Madam Obiamaka Onoli issued an edict by way of a circular letter dated 27th August, 1971 ordering the immediate stoppage of excessive spending on scaled funeral rites to very reasonable proportion.

For its historical importance, the entire edict is reproduced here unedited: "In view of the economic depression in the country, we (meaning the Ikporo or Women of Onitsha) implore you all to use your good offices and adhere to what we are soliciting to you all as follows:-

NON—ONITSHA INDIGENES:

The arrangement will be solely with the fellow and the non-natives. They have the right to settle things with their fellows. No yam will be cooked in the morning. In the case of Umuada no yam will be cooked. They will only take tea in the morning. Any other things they say will be listened to.

IN CASE OF MARRIAGES:

The fellow engaging a wife will only provide for Onitsha requirements stipulated in the Constitution (that is the amount stated). Hot drinks, palmwine and kolanuts. Nobody is allowed to cook anything for the people that come for the marriage ceremony. This is applicable to both parties. Male and female (no cooking of any kind) Failure to comply with this will carry a fine of two thousand naira only N2,000.00 both parties each.

WEDDING MARRIAGE:

No pan of rice or any other things like drinks will be given to the relations of the people. The affected people could only provide services to people only. Any person violating this should pay a fine of N2,000.00 (two thousand naira only). Any person marrying abroad should not cook anything. Failure to comply with this will carry a fine of N2,000.00 (two thousand naira only).

IDU—UNO:

Idu-uno should take place by 4.00 p.m. prompt and to disperse by 5.00 p.m.

These rules are in support with the laws which Onitsha people enacted but neglected for some time now.

A) The Burial Ceremonies in the Town

First burial (fresh);- Tea, in the morning (Nri itu aka). This is applicable to only those that slept overnight. This tea will be served by 7.00 a.m. prompt.

b) The next will be pounded cassava which will take place by 1.00 p.m. or 2.00 p.m. and will take place before any dance commences.

c) As from date, in case of a husband's death, the wife will only provide to the Age Grade Society that comes for the pounding of cassava foofoo. The fellow can only give to the Age Grade Society five lumps of cassava food and soup. Two gallons of of palm wine and two crates of mineral drinks. This is also applicable in the case of the wife's death. Failure to comply with this carries a fine of one thousand naira only. No cooking will be provided to any Age Grade that calls for the burial except 2-cartons beer, 1 carton small stout, 2 crates of mineral drinks, 1 bottle gin, 7 kolanuts and 2 gallons of palm wine.

No Age Grade Society will be permitted to carry any drinkables home or to take any bottle home. Any Age Grade Society that fails to comply with the above will pay a fine of ₦500.00 (five hundred naira only).

In case of Age Grade the affected person will arrange for a place to stay and the fellow will make sure that the contents of everything used are all correct. If any anomaly is noticed the fellow will pay a fine of N600.00 (six hundred naira). The fellow that calls the Age-Grade Society, the fellow that the Society stays in his or her place and the Age Grade Society each will pay N200.00 (two hundred naira) fine.

b) **Burial ceremonies:** The second day the bereaved people can only cook anything that they deem fit, yam in the morning, anything in the afternoon.

Ndichie	N400.00
Agbalanze	N200.00
Ikporo Onitsha	N400.00
(See N1,000.00 para.	(C) above).

The whole Onitsha women have so resolved to enact these laws and to abide by them. Any fellow that fails to comply with these provisions as stipulated above, should face Onitsha Women (Ikporo Onitsha) squarely or pay two thousand naira (N2,000.00).

Thanks for your co-operation.

May God bless you all.

For Ikporo Onitsha. Amen."

Today in Onitsha, all the indigenes especially the less privileged are happy with burial arrangements which are no longer expensive. Thanks to the charismatic leadership of Madam Obiamaka Onoli Okafor who like an Amazon woman towers in height above Onitsha women and men alike. By tradition the head of Ikporo Onitsha is the eldest woman in Onitsha. This has not changed. Obiamaka respects the very aged Madam Egbuna grandmother of Nnanyelugo R.M.C. Chukwurah. The important thing is that Obiamaka is the undisputed spokesman, organiser and moving spirit of Ikporo (women) Onitsha today. She is a successful woman activist.

She has led delegations to the Governor in Government House Enugu on behalf of Onitsha pleading for government intervention in what she describes as unjust treatment of Onitsha people. These include non employment of Onitsha indigenes in Onitsha Local Government. Except for the Secretary to the Local Government there is no Onitsha man of consequence in the local government. Ikporo Onitsha under the active leadership of Obiamaka frowns at the fact that Anambra State Government has acquired the New Nkisi estate not for any known public interest but as a mere layout to share amongst Nigerians with little or no share for the indigenes of Onitsha who own the land. Through Obiamaka's leadership the local government now respects the shrines of Onitsha which in the opinion of Ikporo Onitsha are being desecrated by money hungry non-indigenous traders of Onit-

sha who regard no space too small or respectable for their wares and chattles.

As traditionalists, Onitsha people are unhappy about any act or behaviour that detracts from the high regard in which they hold these sacred spots..

Obiamaka Onoli Okafor, alias Dibueze today's undisputed Onitsha women leader, was born in 1920 by Nwatupele Ibeziako of Ogbendida Village Onitsha. Her mother Udegbumam is from Anam in Anambra Local Government. Popularly called ODERA Madam Obiamaka Okafor was married to late Onoli Okafor of Obikporo. By Onitsha standard she is regarded as successful having erected a three floor storeyed building.

Though illiterate, she is very articulate. She has initiated most of her sons into the prestigious Agbalanze Society. Watching the performance of Obiamaka Onoli and her great influence on Onitsha women and the entire Onitsha indigenous populace reminds one of Omu Nwagboka. May well be that this generation is being reminded of the need for an Omu to buoy up the leadership of the Obi of Onitsha and his chiefs.



LATE ONWANAETILIORA DAN O. IBEKWE

MR. JUSTICE DAN. O. IBEKWE

IN the legal and judicial history of Nigeria, sons and daughters of Onitsha have played a role of respect and honour that is widely acclaimed. Starting from the first Ibo Lawyer and ipso facto the first Onitsha lawyer in the person of the most revered Sir Louis N. Mbanefo, Onitsha indigenes alone who have embraced the profession of law number over a hundred. This is no mean feat even by English standard.

It is with this background that we can appreciate the emergence and role of late Justice Dan Onwura Ibekwe, Onwanaetiliora, who was born in 1920 in Onitsha to Akukalia Omedike Ibekwe of Odojele Onitsha and Enyi Nwabunie Ibekwe of Nibo.

Like most Onitsha boys of his age he attended St. Mary's School Onitsha from 1928 to 1936 and entered what was then called 'ogalanye school' (prestigious) C.K.C. Onitsha from 1937 to 1941. As if he could not afford to waste time to follow a course Destiny had charted for him, he became a junior civil servant in the Judiciary. Soon he was posted to the Library of the Supreme Court Lagos where he interacted with legal luminaries like the Alakijas, the Moores and eminent judges like Sir John Verity and Justice Cormamond.

Before the Supreme Court Building at Tinubu Square Lagos was demolished to make room for modern developments, it was by visiting Dan Ibekwe in the court as a young school leaver in 1947, that the writer had his first opportunity of seeing the inside of the biggest court of the land. As was to be expected he came without a jacket and as protocol frowned seriously at incomplete dressing. Dan quickly provided him with a jacket and tie to match. He looked outwardly respectable and enjoyed sauntering round the large library with tome and tome of heavy law books. "How I wished I could be a lawyer" he mused.

Encouraged by his experience in working in the judiciary, Dan went to London in 1948 and studied law in Middle Temple and was called to the English Bar in 1951. He returned to Nigeria and practised law in Lagos and Aba. While in Lagos he was in the chambers of the famous Alex Taylor, a rare legal cock at the bar and specialist in criminal law. After private legal practice between 1951 and 1957 he became the Legal Adviser to the first Eastern Nigerian Premier Chief Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe from 1957 to 1959. He became Solicitor-General from 1959 to 1965. In 1965 he became a Minister of State in the Federal Ministry of External Affairs up till 1968.

With the outbreak of the Nigeria Civil War in 1967, Dan Ibekwe with many Onitsha luminaries like Prof. Chike Obi, Emma Araka, Fred Anyaegbunam, late Magistrate Odiari were bundled into detention in Biafra. This was a costly price Onitsha had to pay without rhyme or reason.

After the civil war in 1970, Dan was appointed Commissioner for Works in East Central State from June 1970 to 1973.

In 1973 he was appointed a Judge of the Supreme Court, the second Onitsha man after Sir Louis to be so privileged.

With change in Military Administration he was appointed Federal Attorney-General in 1975 — 1977 the first Onitsha man to hold the exalted position. As if the fates had ordained that he would hold all known exalted positions in the Judiciary and Ministry of Justice, he became the first President of the Federal Court of Appeal up to 1978 when he died suddenly after the briefest illness. There was no doubt that had he lived longer he would have become the Chief Justice of the Federation.

A member of the Agbalanze Society of Onitsha, Onwanaetilia Dan Ibekwe was married to former Miss Cecilia ('CY') Achukwu and survived by children, some of whom have followed the footsteps of their father as lawyers.



AKUNNE F.O. UMUNNA

HON. FRED O. UMUNNA

“**S**EEST thou a man that is diligent in his works, he will stand before kings and princes and not before mean people.” The words of the Holy Writ aptly describe Akunne Fred. O. Umunna who from 1943 till he retired meritoriously in November, 1977 was a classical and efficient civil servant after the fashion of the old colonial masters.

No wonder that Mr. Umunna was the first Nigerian Auditor General of Eastern Nigeria immediately after the last expatriate left the country. To be found eligible to take over from a European at that time is a fitting tribute to his high integrity and competence.

Born sixty four years ago of the famous land owning Ifejiofor family of Umudei, Fred was educated at Holy Trinity School and Christ the King College Onitsha. He joined the Nigeria Public Service in 1943 and had a course of training that took him to Ibadan, London, Middlesex, Hayes and Hartington in England.

Having reached the pinnacle of his career by being appointed Director of Audit of Eastern Nigeria and later Auditor General of East Central State and Anambra State, he was honoured with the national award of Member of the Federal Republic (MFR).

Since his retirement in 1977 he was elected into the **Anambra** State House of Assembly from 1979 - 83. Hon. Umunna is a member of the Agbalanze Society of Onitsha and a member of Ifedinma Age Grade Society. He is married with 10 children.



JUSTICE F.O. ANYAEBUNAM
C.F.R., C.O.O.N.

HON. JUSTICE F.O. ANYAEGBUNAM

(CFR., COON)

FOR a lawyer and later a high court judge to reach the pinnacle of his career by being the President or Chief Judge of the Federal High Court is no mean achievement. And that is exactly what one of the sons of Onitsha in the person of Fred Odi Anyaegbunam has done.

Born of the land owning family of Iyasele Nsu of Ogboli Eke Village of Onitsha, young Fred passed through the best schools of his time all located in his hometown Onitsha. They were Holy Trinity School and Christ the King College (C.K.C.)

Like most young men of his time the next best thing to do after high school education was to enter the public service as there was no university in Nigeria until 1948. Fred left C.K.C. Onitsha in 1942 in the same set as Rt. Rev. Michael Eneja the beloved Catholic Bishop of Enugu Diocese and a namesake and first Nigerian Auditor-General of Eastern Nigeria Akunne Fred O. Umunna.

Later Mr. Anyaegbunam studied law in England and returned to Onitsha where he practised with lawyers like former Justice Emma Araka and late Justice B.C.I. Obanye and others. He had an extensive and successful legal practice and became naturally involved in estate management as his family owned a large estate in Onitsha.

During the Obishop dispute in the early sixties, Barrister F.O. Anyaegbunam and Barrister E.O. Araka—as they then were, defended one of the claimants to the royal stool, Nnanyelugo J.O. Onyejekwe. It is to their eternal glory that their client was recommended to be the Obi of Onitsha by the R.W. Harding Commission of Inquiry which was appointed in 1962 by Government of Eastern Nigeria to inquire into the dispute. For a long

time until he became a high court Judge Mr. Anyaegbunam was private solicitor to Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Justice Anyaegbunam was appointed judge of the Federal High Court in 1973 and retired early in 1987 after meritorious service and to the satisfaction of most of the States of the Federation as his valedictory tour testified. All state governors whom he visited were virtually outbidding one another in encomiums showered on the retiring Federal Chief Judge.

Hon. Justice F.O. Anyaegbunam is a Knight of the Catholic Church. As if to show that church honour or practice of Christianity is not against traditional religion and honour he took the Ozo title of Onitsha with the unfamiliar title of Chinweozo which means "God owns ozo title". It is said by some initiates of the prestigious Agbalanze Society that he fell short of the complete performance of some traditional ritual rites for taking ozo title such as going to kneel at the ANI OR ANCESTRAL SHRINE. If this is the case, it may be his idea of avoiding the idolatrous aspect of the traditional ritual. Whether this innovation has advanced the cause of peace among the Agbalanze Society in his village of Ogboli Eke or caused a schism among members of the society and himself is a matter for speculation. The important thing is that Hon. Justice F.O. Anyaegbunam is both a Knight of the Catholic Church conferred on him by His Holiness the Pope, and a member of the prestigious Agbalanze of Onitsha and by his retirement the first retired Chief Judge of the Federal High Court of Nigeria has brought honour and glory to his Fatherland and hometown, Onitsha. He was awarded CFR and COON

Justice F.O. Anyaegbunam is married to Joyce (nee Petgrave from the West Indies) a charming mother of many children one of whom is a lawyer after his father.



AKUKALIA C.O. IKEME

AKUKALIA C.O. IKEME

THE Ozo men of Onitsha who form the prestigious Agbalanze Society of Onitsha are highly respected. Except for the Obi and Red Cap Chiefs, they take precedence in all traditional gatherings. They are also family and clan priests in their own right.

According to Onitsha custom well described by the historian cum anthropologist Richard Henderson, "the bodies of Ozo men are holy. They cannot sit directly upon the ground (without its being covered by goat or sheep skin). They cannot be asked to dig a grave or to carry a corpse because in their proximity to the purified ancestors such contact might cause their own deaths. They cannot be expected to demean themselves by communal labour. If a non-titled person strikes an ozo man or insults him directly, he has committed a forbidden act and must ceremonially undo it just as a son must, if he strikes his father. The ozo man's body is particularly endangered by the defiling properties of women, and therefore no menstruating woman may be allowed in his presence."

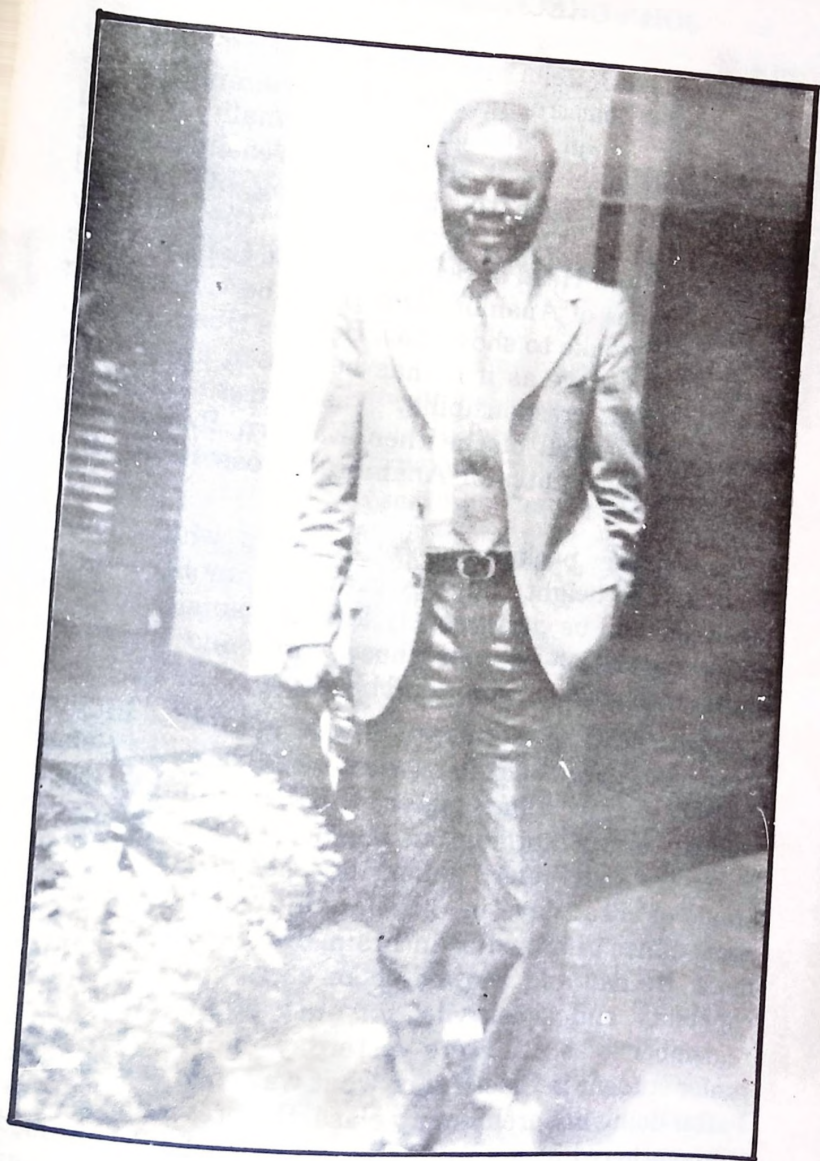
It is against this background that one has to appreciate the role of one who has been elected to lead this society of noblemen in Onitsha. Such is the role which destiny has entrusted to Akukalia Charles O. Ikeme the current President of Agbalanze Society of Onitsha in the year of our Lord 1987.

Born in 1922 of the late Ogbuefi Akukalia Ikeme Emeta of Ogbozala village Onitsha alias Achar Ndi Oji, Onugbu (1875—1941) a frontline leader of the Otu Omekome Age Grade Society, Akukalia C.O. Ikeme of the Honourable member of Lincoln's Inn is a barrister-at-law for over twenty years. As leader of the Agbalanze Society of Onitsha he has played many a conciliatory

role where misunderstandings had arisen in the body politics of Onitsha. During the imbroglio that ensued when the appointment of a new Ogene became problematic, the Agbalanze under Akukalia Ikeme waded into it. The result was that wiser counsel prevailed and what appeared the right appointment was made.

The future of Agbalanze and the challenges which traditional institutions like natural rulers will face in Nigeria's changing political life should be food for thought for a leader like Akukalia C.O. Ikeme.

It is reassuring that with his experience and astuteness he has the experience, courage and tactic for overcoming any obstacles or problems that might arise.



MR J.O. IBEZIAKO

JOHN OKECHUKWU IBEZIAKO

IF there is an Onitsha man - nay a Nigerian - in whom the truism that true greatness lies in simplicity, the totality of John Ibeziako's personality is a manifestation of this fact. Although he is easily the first Onitsha man to reach the highest rung of the civil service as the "Chief Secretary to the Military Government and Head of Service of East Central State now two States of Anambra and Imo, there is nothing about Mr. Ibeziako to show that. Besides this rare feat, he does not behave as if he has held such an onerous position and responsibility as first Nigerian Accountant-General of the then Eastern Region now comprising four states of Anambra, Cross River, Imo and Rivers.

This is the background of a man who though diminutive in height and very calm and unobtrusive in his nature will be conveniently lost in a small crowd of people anywhere — a man whose words and action are replete with wisdom, grace and beauty.

I personally noticed marks of true greatness in John Ibeziako as early as in 1943 when he became the School Prefect of my alma mater C.K.C. Onitsha where students accept nothing but the best in leadership. To be elected the Prefect among hot heads and brilliant brains of those days in C.K.C. one must have what it takes either in brawn or in brain. Ibeziako had all and more. He had and showed them early enough, a high capability and sensitivity for just administration. I remember it as if it were yesterday and I was then a junior student in Class III or what was then called Form I after doing my preliminary class, the previous year, we were gathered in the Assembly Hall of what then used to be 4C classroom in C.K.C. waiting for the Rev. Principal Late Fr. Michael Flanagan to come and

address students on a Monday morning. The delay of the principal in coming led to restlessness among students like a mob, the students began making noise possibly for want of nothing better to do when Johnny walked into the hall impeccably clad in his white uniform of well tailored white shirt, trousers. Black court shoes to match, he said in a voice that was hardly audible, "Keep quite everybody and stop shouting like a pack of rabbles." There was dead silence and no one could mistake the voice of authority and as students turned to the source of the order as he paced confidently on the aisle to the podium which he manned before the Principal arrived, there was no doubt in the mind of the audience who including his own peers and classmates like Dr. and Engineer Ofili the twin brothers of Asaba, the present Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Catholic Archdiocese His Grace the Rt. Rev. Stephen Ez eanya and the former President of the Nigeria Bar Association Andrew Anyamene S.A.N.)

Mr. Ibeziako's high integrity is transparent and you could see through it like a mirror. During the military regime when high calibre officers were accused of corruption, inefficiency and whatever, one of the greatest tributes ever paid to Mr. Ibeziako was recorded in the Nigerian Tide of Port Harcourt in Rivers State in 1974 when the Military Governor of East Central State Col. Ochefu in a press interview at Port Harcourt was asked why he was delaying in sacking his Secretary to Government like all other State Governors had done, he calmly replied that he was satisfied that his Secretary to the Government and Head of Service was not corrupt and that he could personally vouch for that.

In the 1970 Budget Speech of the Administrator of East Central State of Nigeria, it was Mr. Ibeziako's uncanny administrative instinct and need to ensure strict confidentiality that made him advise the then

Administrator not to include the names of the commissioners being appointed in the printed speech until after it was read. His Excellency the Administrator read the names in a different paper. The effect was dramatic and surprising without anyone except the Administrator and his Secretary to Government and Head of Service knowing in advance or allowing any anticipated rumour or gossip of the appointees to the coveted post of Commissioners. It may be recalled that it was in this government immediately after the civil war that Justice J. Nnaemeka Agu of the Court of Appeal was appointed the State Attorney General, late Mr. Dan Ibekwe, the State Commissioner for Works, the controversial but erudite Mr. S.G. Ikoku Commissioner for Economic Planning, Dr. Magnus Adiele Commissioner for Education and Chief Charles Abangwu and Dr. J.O.J. Okezie, were also made commissioners.

It may be recalled that Dr. Okezie was Mr. Ibeziako's classmate at Umuahia Government College while Charles Abangwu finished up in 1943 with John Ibeziako in C.K.C. Onitsha.

Mr. Ibeziako had played a vital role in the upliftment of Onitsha even as a civil servant. Immediately after the civil war, he planned with the Administrator the reconciliation of different fragments of Onitsha indigeneous community following the passing on of Obi Onyejekwe I. The prompt but diplomatic way in which the Government of which he was its secretary and Head of Service got important Onitsha personalities round to recognise the new Obi of Onitsha in 1970 was something of a master stroke.

The Onitsha Development Trust Fund was his cherished baby and dream. It was meant to be used to galvanise community development efforts in areas where government could not easily help the community

in which case they could fall back on their efforts without difficulty. The successful launching of the ₦2 million Development Fund by Obi Ofala Okagbue I, immediately after the civil war paved the way for the building of a new Ime Obi (Palace) of Onitsha.

The then controversial Market Authority and redistribution of market stalls in the Main Market are seen differently today with nostalgia by intelligent Onitsha people. When we realise that hardly any Onitsha man has a market stall in his own town and the percentage of the huge proceeds that come from that market no longer go to Onitsha Development Trust Fund for community development, it is enough to make us rue, the day we attacked and calumniated Asika and his Administration who planned our future in a way we could have continued to benefit from proceeds of our God-given market.

John Okey Ibeziako was born on 23rd June 1921 to late Akunwafo Felix Obumse Ibeziako of Ogboli Olosi and late Ekwunife Elizabeth Ibeziako (nee Achebe of Odojele). He had his early education in Forcados and Awka between 1928 and 1936. He was in Umuahia Government College Umuahia from 1937 to 1938, and later entered Christ the King College Onitsha in 1940 and finished in 1943 by passing the Cambridge School Certificate in Division I with exemption from London Matriculation. He graduated B.Sc. (Economics) Hons from Exeter University Exeter England. He was also a student of the famous London School of Economics.

His work experience include teaching at Catholic School Warri in 1939, St. Mary's School Onitsha in 1944 and civil service career in the Judicial Department from 1945 — 53. By his association with Metropolitan College Onitsha from 1953 - April, 1955 as a graduate teacher (a rare human commodity in those days) the school was

able to get Government recognition and therefore was entitled to receive grants-in-aid.

Mr. Ibeziako returned to the Eastern Nigeria Civil Service in 1955 as a Senior civil Servant in the Ministry of Finance. He rose to become Finance Officer in 1959. Deputy Accountant-General in 1961 and in July 13th 1963 he made history by being the first Nigerian to hold this very responsible post from the last expatriate Mr. Bridget who left the service with the introduction of Nigerianisation of the Civil Service.

After the Nigerian Civil War, it was found by the Administrator East Central State that even in, secessionist Biafra, Mr. Ibeziako's records were without blemish having kept account of all Government financial records correctly, he was promptly appointed Permanent Secretary Ministry of Finance. As if he was yet to reach his manifest destiny, he was promoted in April, 1970 the Secretary to the Military Government and Head of Service. This promotion was epoch making for besides being the first Ibo man to hold the position in a Military Administration, for Onitsha men who have had a very long history of government service and administration, humble, unassuming but knowledgeable John Ibeziako was the first Onitsha man to hold that position and as of date in 1987 the last so far. Onitsha and his alma mater C.K.C. Onitsha could not be better honoured.

Mr. Ibeziako is married to a most devout Christian wife in the person of Lea Chiazor (nee Obumse) Ibeziako with four surviving children.



NNABUENYI P.O. BALONWU SAN

NNABUENYI P.O. BALONWU SAN

P.O.B. as he is popularly known by his many friends throughout the country has his place in history, at least that of Onitsha, assured. Whether others rightly or wrongly catapulted him to a place of eminence or he and certainly merits a place of eminence. And this eminence could not have derived from mere accident of birth — he comes from the Ogbo Family of Umuasele Village of Onitsha a great land owing family. His senior brothers, Stephen and Moses no less than their father had brought fame and honour to Onitsha by their individual achievements. The father was a pioneer court clerk in the riverine areas of Ogbaru and Delta. He built one of the few but imposing *uno enu* (storey building) in Onitsha in the late twenties — a sure sign of opulence and achievement by any standard. Stephen was a great teacher and a qualified one at a time many good teachers were not qualified. He made his mark as a civil servant. Brother Moses well known as former Hon. Justice M.O. Balonwu was Chief Judge of East Central State and for many years Chairman of the National Universities Commission.

The fact that Patrick Ogbogu Balonwu become the first lawyer to take silk as a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) in Anambra State is no mean achievement. This highest honour in Nigeria's legal profession is the equivalent of the Queen's or King's Counsel of England. And to think that P.O. Balonwu stands pre-eminent as the *primus inter pares* among the following colleagues of his from Anambra State:— Chike Ofodile SAN, G.C.M. Onyiuke SAN, Andrew Anyamene SAN, Umeadi SAN, G.R.N. Egeonu SAN, Clement Akpamgbo SAN, Mogbo SAN, Prof. Nwabueze SAN, Ikeazor SAN, speaks of his integrity and hard work as a lawyer.

P.O. Balonwu Esq., is a Notary Public and Senior Advocate of Nigeria and had his early education in Saint Mary's School and C.K.C., Onitsha and Saint Gregory's College Lagos, University of London and was called to the Bar by the Middle Temple in 1961. He is both a Solicitor and Advocate of the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

In 1970, after the Nigerian Civil war, he was appointed the Director of Central Water Transportation Company by the Government of East Central State of Nigeria.

In 1972, he became the Chairman of the Expert Commission on Medical and Health Services in East Central State and submitted his recommendations to the then Government of East Central State that acted upon them. In 1974, the Federal Government appointed him as a Director of the Nigeria Building Society now Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria. He served in that capacity creditably for four years.

In 1980, he was appointed a Director of National Electricity Power Authority (NEPA) by the Federal Government. He served for a year and resigned.

Mr. Balonwu is a philanthropist. He is married with six children. His wife Mrs. J.U. Balonwu nee Otaluka is also a lawyer. Mr. P.O. Balonwu is also a Director of many companies including Dumez Nigeria Limited and Commercial Bank Credit Lyonnais Nigeria Limited. Mr. Balonwu has extensive legal practice in Nigeria.

He is a member of the Agbalanze Society of Onitsha and a member of legal Practitioners Privileges Committee. Mr. Balonwu's hobby is farming. No wonder he has a large farm of crops, animal husbandry and fish pond at Nsugbe 20 kilometres from Onitsha on the Onitsha Nsukka Road.



H.R.H. OFALA OKAGBUE I

AFTER the last Ofala of Obi Onyejekwe speculation became rife in many quarters as to what direction the wind of change shall blow in Onitsha having regard to the hazy socio-political climate of the immediate past. Obviously it was the turn of the Okebunabo family to choose the next Obi.

Subsequently the king-makers met and unanimously gave the green light to the Okebunabo kindred to proceed with the selection of the new Obi. Headed by their political leader, Chief E.C. Nwokedi, the Ogene of Onitsha, the Committee entrusted with the task of examining candidates gallantly performed their obligation in utmost secrecy and eliminated all traces of evil practice of bribery and corruption that beset such selections in the past.

By and large, for the first time in seventy years, Onitsha witnessed the selection of an Obi in a peaceful atmosphere bereft of cut-throat rivalry and recriminations. Within a period of nineteen days after the celebration of the last Ofala, both the Umuezechima and the Ndichies were summoned by Chief Nwokedi Ogene to his compound on Sunday, October 25, 1970, for the presentation of the Obi-elect.

During the presentation, the Ogene gave a brief account of how the selection was carried out in a peaceful manner. Eight candidates had presented themselves by formal application indicating their desire to compete for the throne. The selection committee members whose identities were unknown to the rank and file, carefully scrutinized every application and dealt with it according to merits. This method elicited processing and elimination until the last two applications. Then votes were cast by the members of the committee and it eventually fell to the lot of

Akukalia Alphonsus Ogugua Ofala Okechukwu Okagbue who polled the highest number of votes.

After the report, the Obi-elect was presented to the Umuezechima king-makers. His geneology was traced to Obi Chimukwu (4th Obi of Onitsha). Following the citation, the King-makers unanimously gave their approval to the candidature of Mr. Okechukwu Okagbue. Earlier in the day the Obi-elect had been presented to the Ndichie, although such presentation should have been made, according to customary practice, after the approval of the Umuezechima king-makers.

On Tuesday, October 27, 1970, the Obi-elect was presented to the Onitsha populace at the Obikporo Square. The Ogene held him by hand and presented him to the mammoth crowd which unanimously signified its approval by a tumultuous ovation that rent the air in appreciation of the fine choice of a person whose personality and unique demeanour are beyond reproach. Rousing encomiums were showered on the Ogene for the great service he did to his fatherland by honestly supervising the selection to a successful conclusion.

Addressing the crowd, Mr. Okagbue thanked the Almighty God for having spared his life to witness the memorable event. He also thanked all those who by one way or the other contributed to the success of his selection. He promised to do all that lay in his power, by the grace of God, to rule the community peacefully and democratically and to uphold the tenets of the people's laws and customs. He concluded by asking God to grant him grace and wisdom with which to shoulder successfully the onerous duties of a ruler.

From the square, he was carried shoulder high to his residence where the traditional ima-nzu ceremony was performed on him as the beginning of the first phase of

ceremonies leading to his coronation. As from that day, he entered the period of *inchendu* (abstinence from all social activities and confinement in the home for a time not less than twenty-eight days in order to get the Obi-elect experience spiritual purification as a pre-requisite to his coronation, at Udo shrine).

On November 15, 1970, the Administrator of the East Central State, Mr. Ukpabi Asika, summoned the two opposing camps of Ndichie Ume to Enugu in connection with the ten years old obishop tangle over the selection of late Obi Onyejekwe. The Administrator successfully appealed to the good sense of the Ndichie and finally resolved the long-standing dispute. The official communique issued after the Administrator's intervention stressed the mutual agreement reached to the effect:—

- (a) that by the death of Obi Onyejekwe a vacancy has occurred on the throne of Onitsha. It was noted that the Okebunabo family has chosen as Obi-elect who will be traditionally presented to the Onowu, the rest of the Ndichie and the people of Onitsha.
- (b) that the controversial installation of certain Ndichie Okwa by the late Obi be traditionally regularised.

The peace agreement was signed by Chief Philip Anatogu, the Onowu Iyasele of Onitsha late Chief E.N. Nwokedi, the Ogene of Onitsha. Chief I.A. Mbanefo, the Odu of Onitsha late Chief H. Oreffo; the Owelle of Onitsha late Chief R.N. Araka, the Ojudo of Onitsha, late Chief M.O. Ibeziako, the Onoli of Onitsha late Sir Louis N. Mbanefo late Akunne A. Ukpabi, late Ajie of Onitsha, Mr. F.O. Anyaegbunam retired Justice, late Justice, Mr. B.C.I. Obanye, and Mr. J.O. Ibeziako erstwhile, Secretary to the East Central State Military Government.

Thus came to a peaceful end the ten-year old dispute which had split Onitsha society into warring camps much to the discomfiture of family relationship. By his successful intervention, Mr. Asika, no doubt, had carved a niche for himself in the hall of fame in the history of political administration in Nigeria. Think of it - government by mediation and not by phoney Commission of Inquiry lobbied by party politics?

The crystallisation of the peace agreement reached its climax after the emergence of the new Obi from the Udo Shrine on 26 December, 1970, when all the Ndichie, members of the Agbalanze society and a cross-section of the populace converged at the compound of the Onowu of Onitsha to witness the Obi's traditional performance of token domestic service as part of his coronation ceremonies.

There was radiant joy on the faces of all and sundry many of whom had not met together or shaken hands for the past ten years. At the Obi's palace, the new Obi and his Chiefs were hailed, but above all, they showered encomiums on Ukpabi Asika and showed appreciation for his fruitful mediation which has once more brought peace to the people of Onitsha.

Born on October 5, 1923, Obi Okagbue received his early education at St. Mary's Catholic School, Onitsha Inland Town, and later at Christ the King College, Onitsha. On completion of his secondary education he entered the mercantile service of Messrs John Holt and Company Limited. Later he became the Area Sales Representative of the Mobil Oil Nigeria Limited. He retired from the service in 1970 after the demise of Obi Onyejekwe when it fell to him the lot to be chosen as a candidate for the vacant throne by his family.

Obi Okagbue can be truly described as a man of destiny, in view of the fact that since he became a

candidate for the Obishop things have always run smoothly for him and no visible obstacle has ever appeared in his way in the pursuit of his objections. Medium-sized and handsome, the Obi is every inch a king of peace and prosperity. His vivacious demeanour has really endeared him to the hearts of his subjects. He is also king of youths, for he has seen the future progress of his people on the ability and initiative of youths' organisations and age-grade societies.

One month after his coronation he broke tradition and travelled to the Northern States with the Administrator of the East Central State, on the invitation of the Head of the Federal Military Government, General Yakubu Gowon. At Zaria they were guests at a special military parade. They were also guests at the convocation of the Ahmadu Bello University where the Administrator received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. They later visited Kano on the invitation of the Governor of Kano State, Police Commissioner Audu Bako. The experience the Obi gained during the travel has indeed been of immense benefit to him in the intricate manipulation of human relations.

On January 27, 1971, the head of the Federal Military Government, General Yakubu Gowon, arrived Onitsha with his entourage of administrative and military personnel on a state visit. At the Ime Obi the august visitor was given a royal reception by the Obi and his red-cap chiefs. Later in the evening the visitor drove round the town and saw for himself ruins and desolation which was the lot of the town as a result of the civil war.

The following day, the General was given a tumultuous reception by the Onitsha community at the Onitsha Stadium where he was presented with an address of welcome and several gifts. In reply he sympathised with Onitsha people for the extent of

damage to business and properties suffered by them during the war. He promised that the Federal Government would do all it could to help in reactivating public institutions and particularly the renowned Onitsha Main Market. Amidst cheers he announced that a sum of £150,000 had been voted as part of the cost for the reconstruction of the market. The crowd present at the Stadium was estimated at over 80,000 by a Mid-West daily paper. This figure was said to be the highest of any crowd that received His Excellency during his one week tour of the East Central State.

The reign of Obi Okagbue since his ascension to the throne of Onitsha is vividly full of spectacular and progressive events which augur well for him as one destined to be one of the greatest Obis of Onitsha.

It is therefore most significant that in 1971 a delegation of the Mid-West State natural rulers and chiefs, led by the State's Commissioner of Land and Housing, late Chief Frank Oputa-otutu, attended the Obi's first Ofala Festival.

The Chiefs were: BENIN DIVISION: Chief Eribo, Chief Abadagbenyi, Chief Obadoradesuwa, Chief Osunalaye, Chief Uniogbe, Chief Oghator, Chief Osagiolator, and Chief Obanwonyi. WARRI DIVISION: Chief B.R. Januma-Iyasere of Warri, Chief Ologbosere, Chief Uwangwe, ASABA DIVISION: His Highness R.P. Onyetune, the Asagba of Asaba, His Highness R. Osamene III, the Obi of Issele-Uku, His Highness Obi Anyansi II of Idumoje Unor, Obi Ezenweani of Ezi, Chief Obanor of Ubulu-Uku and Chief Isidore Agokei of Ibusau. ABO DIVISION: Chief A.A. Anionye, the Onotu Uku of Ashaka and Chief L.U. Edene and Chief J.O. Daphei of Obiaruku. AISHAN DIVISION: Chief I.O. Nayble, Chief J.O. Abumare, Onogie of Ekpoma and Chief B.I. Omehime of Ewato.

IKA DIVISION: Chief Iyeke, Chief Osagie, and Chief Ogana. WESTERN URHOB O DIVISION: Chief J.E. Biokor, the Otata of Okpe. EASTERN URHOB O DIVISION: Chief J.E. Biokor, the Otata of Okpe. EASTERN URHOB O DIVISION: Chief Igere Adjara II, the Ovie of Agbor.

In fact the occasion provided a unique opportunity for a reunion between Onitsha people and their kindred from the Mid-West since about 400 years when the people of Onitsha left their ancestral home-Benin.

The 1972 Ofala was no less historical by the attendance of the erstwhile Military Governor of the Mid-West Col. Samuel Ogbemudia, in company of the Administrator of the East Central State, Mr. now Chief Ukpabi Asika.

The rising tide of Obi Okagbue's reign reached a very remarkable water-mark on October 11, 1973, the second day of his Ofala Festival, when he successfully launched the Two Million Naira Onitsha Development Trust Fund.

The Development Programme, no doubt, has successfully aroused a spirit of dedication and community self-help in the majority of Onitsha citizens at home and abroad. Its laudable objectives are geared towards the improvement of infrastructures and development of small scale industries.

The moving spirit behind the Development Project is the Odoziaku Age Grade Society which was appointed the ruling age grade according to custom by the Obi on June 4, 1972.

Since his accession to the throne of Onitsha, Obi Ofala has conferred chieftaincy titles on prominent citizens, to wit: The Right Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Owelle of Onitsha; Mr. Akigwe Ukpabi, the Ajie of Onitsha; Mr. Ubanyionwu Etukokwu, the Odua of Onitsha; Mr.

L.O.V. Enweonwu, the Adaze of Onitsha, Mr. J. Abadom, the Akpe of Onitsha and Prof. A.N.A. Modebe the Ogene of Onitsha.

In the year 1974, the Obishop of state which had been sailing on placid waters severely hit a storm during the allocation lock-up stores and open stalls in the Onitsha Main Market by the Onitsha Market Authority. Onitsha indigenes did not take kindly the manner the exercise was carried out and to some of the aspects of the role played by the Obi in the matter.

The famous market which was destroyed by fire during the civil war was rebuilt at a cost of 5 million naira.

Obi Ofala Okagbue I who belongs to Ifedinma Age Grade Society of Onitsha, is the Chancellor of Bayero University Kano which awarded him an honorary degree in honora causa. He is a Director of Mobil Ltd. an International Oil Company. He is also Director of a Japanese Firm Mitsui Nig. Ltd. He was honoured by the Sudanese Government with a national award. He is President of the Council of Chiefs in Anambra State.

(culled from Grandwork of Onitsha History and Culture by S.I. Bosah)



LATE MRS VERO. O. OFILI
(Nee Egbuna)

DR. MRS VERONICA O. OFILI

IN a country or society like ours which is dominated by men, the success of any woman in a field which is the exclusive preserve of men, is in itself a mark of achievement of the woman concerned. To that extent the fact that Dr. Mrs. Veronica O. Ofili (nee Egbuna) was the first Ibo woman from Onitsha to qualify as a Medical Doctor has without any doubt assured her a place in the history of Onitsha and Iboland.

Born in 1923 at Onitsha, the only daughter of her parents. Veronica attended Catholic Convent School in Warri, now Bendel State, Saint Agnes' Teacher Training College, Yaba. She became Headmistress Catholic School Sapele after obtaining her Teachers Grade I Certificate, a rare feat in those halcyon days.

Qualifying in 1953 in Dublin Ireland with degrees of LRCP LRCS, LAU, LM - Ireland FNMC (Nigeria) she was the first Ibo woman from Onitsha to become a Medical Practitioner — infact the first woman medical doctor in the erstwhile Eastern Nigeria. Her contemporaries while a student in Ireland include late Igwe B.A.O. Amobi, late Dr. Ignatius Modebe, Dr. Ibuzo, Dr. Sam. A. Azike, Senator Jaia Wachukwu, Dr. Theo. N. Okechukwu.

Dr. Veronica Obiamaka Ofili (nee Egbuna) was just posted to Aba General Hospital after her qualification and house-manship in England. Before her death in 1977, at Enugu, she was Senior Consultant and acting Chief Consultant of Park Lane Hospital, Enugu.

Dr. V.O. Ofili was married to Akunwafor J.D.N. Ofili and was survived by children.



QUEEN'S VISIT 1956

Sitting L to R: Bishop Heery, Sir Justice Earnley C.J. Dr. Azikiwe Premier Eastern Nigeria, Sir Clement Pleass, Hon. E.N. Egbuna Speaker, Sir Louis N. Mbanefo, Eastern Nigeria Bishop C.J. Paterson.

Standing L to R: Governor's ADC, Dr. M.I. Okpara, Mr. Eronini Deputy Speaker,



EKE PRINCE P.O. EKWEREKWU

Prolific freelance journalist and
a man of courage and conviction.



CHIEF PROF. A.N.A. MODEBE
The Ogene of Onitsha

CHIEF PROFESSOR A.N.A. MODEBE, THE OGENE-ONIRA OF ONITSHA

SEEING a man in his older years, it is usually inconceivable to think of him as having ever been suckled by a mother, breast-fed like any other baby, dressed too in nappies, lapped sometimes and at other times rocked in the cradle and lulled to sleep. But that is the inescapable truth about the beginnings of every human person.

Professor Anthony Nwachukwu Amaechi Modebe did not start off as a child scientist or baby philosopher. He climbed stage by stage up the scale through the expected rungs of human development. But it is to his credit that he did so in style by dint of hard work, as a youngman who knew his mind with his goal clear before him, and had the will to strive to achieve it. He may not have known he would climb to the utmost rungs but there he is an evidence of the inscrutable ways of providence.

The Earliest Beginning of the Scholar Statesman:

He was born of the illustrious parentage to late J.F.A. Modebe of Obikporo Village and late Margaret Uzonwanne Modebe on July 8, 1925.

The Ogene began his early education at St. Mar School, Ihiala and thence proceeded to pursue secondary school education at Christ the King College, Onitsha. (1942—1945).

In his school days, especially at CKC, he was a sportsman and took great interest in soccer. By 1949 he was in Dublin, admitted to the National University of Ireland, where he took his bachelor's degree in agricultural science and subsequently a master's degree and a doctorate in the same discipline by 1955.

His career in the academic continued at the University College Ibadan (1955—1966) where he lectured and later rose through the post senior lecturer to be appointed to the chair of professor of agriculture and head of department. He thus did Onitsha proud by becoming the first indigenous citizen to be appointed a university professor.

From records of his academic career, the university very much appears the natural environment of the Ogene, having known its traditions curiously well. At the university of Ibadan, he was the chairman of the Convocation Committee and the institution's public orator (1965). He also served on various academic boards and committees within the university, including the Senate, Appointments and Promotions Committee, Publications Committee of the University press. Building Works and Sites Committee as well as the development committee. Prof. Modebe retired from Ibadan and left in 1966 to become a foundation and management member of the then proposed University of Science and Technology. Port Harcourt, under the chairmanship of Prof. Kenneth Dike. The Rivers State University of Technology (now established) later came to inherit all the materials generated by this committee as a blue print.

He was appointed the Administrator for Onitsha province in 1967 and chairman of Eastern Nigeria, Development Corporation ENDC or BDC during the period 1967—70;

At the end of the civil war, the Ogene was appointed Professor of Agriculture and Dean of Agricultural sciences of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka as well as Chairman of the Convocation Committee and public orator of the university (1970—1975).

From 1976 till 1979, the Ogene held the post of chairman of the Nigeria Palm Produce board.

A few coincidences have marked the life of the Ogene especially with respect to his keen interest in identifying with Onitsha cultural roots.

He took his Ozo title on the new year's eve of 1976 and two years later precisely on the new year's eve of 1978, he performed the "Igbunye Ewu Ndi-ichie" ceremony, preparatory to his taking the Ndi-ichie chieftaincy title of Oghuoba Anyalogbom.

Since then, he has taken a vigorous part and played prominent role in the affairs of Onitsha. He has for about eight years featured as a key figure in palace ceremonials, helping out with speeches for the palace and presentations which he ably put together.

From 1976 to 1986 he has been a cabinet member of His Royal Highness, the Obi of Onitsha, in his chieftaincy position and held the post of chairman of the Palace, Projects and Ceremonials Committee of the Obi and Council.

And for the third time, there was the new year's eve coincidence when in December 31, 1986, the Oghuoba was elevated to the rank of Ndi-Ichie Ume with the title of Ogene-Onira.

Chief (Prof) Anthony Modebe is currently engaged in agricultural consultancy, setting up of projects and holds the directorship position in a number of companies, including Pfizer of which he is an associate.

The Ogene is a widely travelled scholar, whose trips to various parts of the world were largely in connection with the pursuit of learning and research in the quest of academic excellence. Most of the fellowships with which he undertook the various research studies were awarded by foreign foundations and governments, principally Britain, Sweden and the Rockefeller Foundations. He

still pays glowing tributes for the honour done him by these benefactors.

These facilities enabled him to travel to several top universities in the United States and other institutions in Europe and the Far East. He owes most of the major contributions he made in his discipline at the University of Ibadan and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka to the opportunities thrown open to him in this way.

There is perhaps no better proof of his commitment to academics and vast involvement in academia than taking a glimpse at his rich library, which constitutes an invaluable heritage.

To date, he still holds the directorship of Livestocks Feeds limited and has co-authored several academic and professional publications.

The Ogene still retains his membership of several academic professional and international societies. He is a recipient of the National Honour of the Republic of Ivory Coast, with which he was invested while representing the University of Ibadan at the inauguration of the University of Ivory Coast in the mid-sixties.

In an interview after his installation as Ogene-Onira Chief A.N.A. Modebe replied as follows:—

Question: Having pursued a largely academic career and held a number of administrative appointments at both regional and national levels, what vision do you now have of your Chieftaincy role in a purely traditional setting?

Answer: The conferment on me, of the senior chieftaincy title (Ndi-Ichie Ume) of Ogene-Onira of Onitsha, poses new challenges which

I resolve to tackle to the best of my ability. It is my belief that the experience which I gained from my previous career and appointments, including that of the junior chieftaincy title of Ogbuoba-Anyalagbon of Onitsha, should enable me discharge effectively the duties of my new office and creditably play the desired role.

Question: Every dedicated leader aspires to leave behind some legacy for posterity. What should Onitsha people look forward to during your tenure as Ogene Onira?

Answer: My simple answer is — PEACE AND PROGRESS, On the occasion of the first stage of my installation (Igbunye-Ewu ceremony) at the palace (Ime-Obi) of the Obi of Onitsha, on New Year's eve. 31st December 1986, His Royal Highness, the Obi called for peace and tranquility among the people of Onitsha. That message went down well with our people. As a holder of high office in Obi's cabinet, I consider it my responsibility to support that clarion call and will endeavour to promote and maintain the peace in the community within the limits of my skill and ability.

Question: In the light of current political thought on constitutional government, do you think that traditional chieftaincy institution still has any valid place in the context of modern political arrangement in the country?

Answer: The question reminds me of an article I read some years ago in one of the national dailies. The author, one Labanji Bolaji wrote in

support of increased use of traditional rulers in the process for nation-building. He commented as follows: "If the Americans had inherited a system including traditional rulers, they would have found a suitable place for such rules in their constitution. Why can't we in Nigeria?"

The fact is that it is fashionable for us in this country to seek and embrace anything foreign and wherever possible discard those things that are indigenous to our society. We adopt the alien political systems which had been evolved in other lands on the basis of their culture, their traditions and their temperament. We are reluctant to develop our own peculiar system which has its roots in our own society.

Even before the arrival of the British colonialist, we had in the area now known as Nigeria, indigenous political systems. We had kingdoms, big and small, presided over by traditional/natural rulers and each with its full paraphernalia of government. The British, on arrival, did not completely dismantle the political systems they met but made use of them in the governance of the country.

Traditional rulers and traditional institutions are closest to the people and constitute an embodiment of their culture. They should closely intergrate with the government at the local level. That is, government at the grassroots.

In my view, it is long over due for us in this country to look seriously at the possibility of

evolving our own political system most suited to our purposes, especially as all the borrowed systems we have so far tried have failed us. Appropriate constitutional safeguards would make our traditional institutions not only sacred and revered but also a necessary instrument for national cohesion, integration and nation-building.

Question: In all the years of your tenure as Ogbuoba-Anyalogbom since 1978, in what ways do you think traditional rulership can enhance the role of local government in meeting the goals and aspirations of the inhabitants at the grass-roots?

Answer: As I said earlier, Local Government is regarded as government at the grass-root. I believe that the use of traditional institutions at the local government level would eliminate the necessity of divisive, partisan politics and all it entails, at least at one level of our national life, it would promote peace and orderliness at the grass-root level and politics in whatever form would be limited to the state and federal levels.

Making use of traditional institutions should ensure the development and progress of the people within the area. It would take into account the traditional arrangements which had proved very effective in many parts of the country, even before the arrival of the British colonialists.

Question: Beyond the role played so far and the efforts invested by the National Council for Museums and Monuments in the retrieval and preservation of national antiquities in various communities, what part does Onitsha

traditional rulership play in safe-guarding the physical aspects of Onitsha heritage in terms of historical buildings, antiques, shrines and other cultural artefacts in the face of the blistering touches of urbanisation.

Answer:

The people of Onitsha have become increasingly conscious of the need to preserve the visual aspects of their heritage. In this connection efforts are being made and will be further intensified, at protecting and venerating our shrines and all our other cultural artefacts.

We are currently undertaking a project of constructing a new palace (Ime Obi) for His Royal Highness, the Obi of Onitsha, I have the pleasure and privilege of being the chairman of the Palace Projects, and Ceremonials Committee assigned that responsibility.

The first phase of the project is nearing completion and the palace has officially been opened and currently in use. The projections of the new palace include the provision of a museum and a library which will serve as a repository for documents and other materials of historic interest. The centre should thus serve as major facility where important antiquities relating to the historical evolution of Onitsha and surrounding Igbo heartland would be collected and preserved for posterity and the use of research scholars.

Question: Some aspects of local traditions are said to have become anachronistic and incompatible with modern acceptable ways of doing things. Do you envisage the possibility of a

comprehensive review of what is inconsistent with current usages and practices? Has the traditional rulership any organised structure for such reviews?

Answer: I believe that the basic culture of our people should be preserved. Wholesale transplantation of foreign cultures is not desirable and should not be encouraged.

No people in the world can properly exist without a culture of their own. No doubt, the supplantation of our traditional ways of life, our sense of values, constitute one of the basic problems which has retarded the progress and advancement of our country.

Culture of any people, on the other hand cannot remain static. It must be dynamic. And so, while preserving the essence of our culture, there is need to make from time to time whatever modifications that are necessary. And there is in Onitsha, the organised structure for such periodic reviews.

Question: Onitsha's reputation nationally and internationally seems to rest largely on its past and as a commercial nerve centre in the country. What prospects, do you foresee for Onitsha in future in such areas as tourism and industrialisation?

Answer: The prospects are indeed great. Many of the major cities of the world which today are famous, industrial and tourist centres were at one time renowned centres for trade and commerce. Industrial activity often develops around centres of trade which serves as a ready market outlet for their products.

The recent announcement by the Anambra

State Government, A.N.S.G., of the proposed establishment of a new Industrial Estate of Onitsha is a move in the right direction.

Onitsha has the reputation of being the gate-way of Eastern Nigeria. Rich in culture, it had contributed immensely towards the development of the rest of Igboland, east of Niger, both culturally and historically. With the continued development of the city and the proposed programme of preservation of its artefacts its prospects as a major tourist attraction should be greatly enhanced.

Question: Substantial aspects of Onitsha culture have been preserved through oral tradition and extracted records in fragmentary forms in private family documents. With your academic background, what do you hope to contribute in securing a more permanent form of what is gradually being lost?

Answer: I had previously made reference to the plans we have for the new palace. (Ime Obi) which while being the official residence of the Onitsha monarchs will also serve as repository for materials and documents of historical interest.

As soon as the facilities have been established efforts will be made to recover from wherever they may exist all those antiquities which relate to the historical and cultural evolution of Onitsha in particular and Igboland and Nigeria in general. In this connection, a programme of scholarships and research fellowships is proposed in order to promote research activities in these areas.

Mr P.O. Ekwerekwu, the Eke Prince of Okposi Eke family in Ogboli Eke Village of Onitsha on the occasion of Chief Prof. Modebe's installation as Ogene

Onira articulated on the cultural significance of the Ogene Onira Chieftaincy Title of Onitsha thus:-

Like some other Onitsha titles, the chieftaincy title of Ogene Onira is of Benin Origin. In Benin Ogbe (Ogene) and Oliha (Onira) appear to be two different titles but in Onitsha they are fused into one and borne by one incumbent.

Ogene Onira is one of the six most senior red cap chiefs of Onitsha, who rank next to the Obi and constitute his cabinet. He is the fifth in the hierarchy. Before him in the order of seniority are the Onowu (Iyasele), the Ajie (Isagba), Odu (Osodi), and Onya (Ozoma) with the Owelle (Osowa) coming after him.

Ogene Onira enjoys the same privileges and exhibits the same characteristics as the other five. He owns and maintains the traditional war drums (Egwu Ota) used in his domain at funeral ceremonies. He does not shake hands indiscriminately. He does not see corpses. He is above grief and does not mourn the passing of his children or relations. His foods must be cooked by chaste servants.

Like the other red-cap chiefs, the Ogene is both a military and political leader. In pre-colonial times, whenever hostilities erupted between Onitsha and other towns, the Ogene would share with Onowu the leadership of one of the three divisions into which Onitsha warriors were grouped.

The junior chiefs, serving in his division include the Omodi, the Ozi, the Akpe, the Ojiba, the Ozizani, in addition to the Ojudo, Akwue and Asagwali.

Since the advent of british Colonial administration which marked the cessation of inter-town wars, Ogene's function has been largely the administration of the traditional life in his domain.

The Ogene's other pet designation is "Ukpaka" meaning the seed pod of the oil-been tree. This designation is meant to symbolise profuse generosity which benefits a wide circle of men and women.

It is remarkable that when the seed-pod of the oil been tree explodes the seeds are scattered over a wide area.

It is remarkable that Ogene-Onira chieftaincy title is not the exclusive preserve of any clan or quarter in Onitsha but is accessible to any Onitsha man that exhibits dynamism of character usually associated with incumbents.

Some of the past holders of the title include.

- (a) Chief Muonweokwu of Ogboli-Eke, a descendant of Iyase Nsu and forefather of Justice Chinweozor Anyaegbunam.
- (b) Chief Ojiegbu of Iyiawu, an ancestor of Chief Omekam, the Agba of Onitsha.
- (c) Chief Nwabufu of Odoje who shed the title to assume the clan kingship (Eze Idi) of Ubene.
- (d) Chief Obiogbolu of Ogbo-Olosi, alias Obi Eze Oba, forefather of Prof. Chike Obi.
- (e) Chief Emodi Obi of Ogboli-Olosi, son of Obi Eze Oba, who installed Kwochaka Amobi as the Igwe of Ogidi.
- (f) Chief Inosi Onira of Okebunabo, ancestor of a section of ogbeabu, comprising Daike, Ozoma ocha and Osodi families.
- (g) Chief Okechukwu of Umudei, father of Nnanyelugo UAC Nesianya.

BY ACHIKE CHUKS OKAFO



MRS F. CHIO. EMODI

FELICIA CHIO EMODI (MRS)

IF you were planning to constitute a committee for anything progressive whether social, religious or political the name CHIO EMODI comes readily to mind as an acceptable choice. Such is the integrity and personality of this Onitsha woman whose fair and beautiful complexion no less than her elegance and dignified comportment anywhere has earned her the sobriquet of Nne Manwu (mother of the gods): a title for women in Onitsha, whose social standing is as good as men's.

Born on 24th April, 1924; to late Mr. Edward Obiozor Asika - Father of Chief Ukpabi Asika — and late Mrs. Victoria Mgbodume Asika (nee Balonwu) and sister of erstwhile Justice Moses Balonwu Chio was trained in Immaculata Primary School, Onitsha between 1932 and 1938.

Although some Onitsha girls like Cecilia Egwuatu and Rebecca Obi now Mrs. Nzegwu had pioneered attending this prestigious premier National School, Queen's College Lagos from Onitsha; the success of CHIO EMODI in the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate and Government Middle Six Certificate in 1942 was a big achievement for a girl and news about town in Onitsha in 1942.

No wonder Chio was a well sought after bride fit only for the best bachelors at the time. Late C.C. Emodi; handsome, debonair and quiet spoken surveyor; an ex-student of both Wesleyan Boys's High School Lagos and the famous Yaba College, Nigeria's only "University" before Ibadan University was both the lucky suitor and husband of this highly educated lady by the standard of the time. And it may be recalled that Evarest Asika, "one of the most

brilliant students that ever passed through Yaba College", to quote Dr. S.E. Imoke was CHIO'S only full brother. He qualified a lawyer after taking a degree in Commerce but died before he could ever practise Law.

CHIO'S greatness lies in the fact that whatever she ever did, she did very well. In 1953—1970, she was perhaps the only female staff (besides Mrs. Chude of Egba extraction—a pioneer tutor) in Metropolitan College, Onitsha. In 1970—1972, she served in the East Central State Rehabilitation Commission as Social Welfare Officer in charge of pilot projects like:

- i. Relief centre and kitchen for the Onitsha Community
- ii. Home Economics workshop for girls
- iii. Setting up of the kindred (Women) Co-operatives in Onitsha Town.
- iv. Establishment of a Motherless babies home in September 1972 having now been deployed in the social Welfare Division of the D.A.D.)
- v. A Day Care Centre in June 1977 for the Onitsha Area Welfare council permanent project centre: and
- vi. Building a staff housing complex from 1977 to 1983.

She has participated in workshops and conferences in and outside Nigeria.

She was regional delegate for the former Eastern Region of Nigeria to the International Council for women's Conference in June 1963 to represent the National Council of Women's Societies in Washington D.C.

In 1976 She attended a course at the University of Lagos on the delivery of social welfare services.

She represented Anambra State in 1981 at the African Regional Conference for social workers (North, East, Central and West Africa) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In 1982, she was nominated by the Federal Ministry of Education for an international early childhood education programme:

Mrs. Chio Emodi's some other activities and services include the following:—

- (a) 1956 to 58 she was member of the Board of Governors, Queen of the Rosary College (Q.R.C.)
- (b) 1958 to 1964, she was divisional officer of the Nigerian Red Cross Society Onitsha.
- (c) 1959 to 1967, she was financial secretary, council of social services, Onitsha.
- (d) 1959 to 1966, served as honorary secretary of the national council of women's societies, Onitsha branch and from 1979 became President of this same society to date.
- (e) From 1961 to 1967 Chio was juvenile Court assessor.
- (f) In 1978, she was welfare officer and foundation member of Ado Club of Nigeria: in the same year, she joined the peoples Club of Nigeria, Onitsha branch.
- (g) In 1975, she participated in the Pilgrimage to Rome and Lourdes, France: Where She later in 1981, attended the world Eucharistic Congress.
- (h) Chio became a member of the life membership committee of the catholic women organisation (C.W.O.) in 1974 and was appointed patron of the Onitsha Archdiocesan C.W.O. in 1984.

- (i) In June 1984, His Grace the Archbishop of Onitsha nominated Mrs. Chio Emodi to represent the Onitsha Archdiocese at the 2nd International Congress for Europe, East, Central and West Africa, on family planning held in Rome.
- (j) In 1986, Mrs. Emodi attended a workshop on Billings Ovulation method as a representative of the Onitsha Archdiocesan Marriage Advisory council in Louisiana, U.S.A.
- (k) The Obi-in-Council appointed CHIO to serve on the Onitsha Development Trust Fund Committee, incidentally the only woman member, from 1972 to 1975.
- (l) From 1984 to date, she is a member of the Onitsha New Palace Projects and Ceremonials Committee of the Obi in Council and later in the same year, she was nominated Hon. Secretary of the planning and strategic sub-committee of the Palace Projects Committee.
- (m) Mrs. Emodi has five surviving children — all University graduates one of them a Medical Doctor.



OJINNAKA SAM N. IFEKA

MENTION of anybody in trouble such as we know the subject of this chapter is, is bound to be taken with mixed feelings or misgiving. We conveniently forget the Son of God's saying to the Jews who wanted to kill Mary who was said to be caught in adultery. After writing on the ground, Jesus said, "He who is not guilty of what the woman was accused, let him first cast a stone," The Holy Writ told us that everyone left the scene one after the other without casting a stone.

In a society where people play the role of "holier than thou" until they are found out, the words of Apostle Paul are lost on us "All men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

And for those who may still question the inclusion in this series of one who has served his people and country to the best of his ability even if he had cause to fall foul of the law, the words of Joachim Miller are both instructive and should make them to hold their peace.

"In men whom men pronounce as ill
I find so much of goodness still
In men whom men pronounce divine
I find so much of sin and blot
I do not dare to draw a line
Between the two when God has not."

Sir Francis Bacon of England, one of the world's greatest intellectuals and a man of high rank and even nobility of birth in his country is no less great today because he was imprisoned in the Tower. Since no one in this life has a right to judge let us go ahead to recognise the contributions of a man to society despite life's inscrutable vicissitudes.

Sam Ifeka who without any background of civil service experience was appointed chairman of Onitsha Local Government Council and later appointed a Commissioner of Finance in Anambra State no doubt attained a respectable situation in life which deserves a record in the history of Onitsha.

Born on 5th June, 1927 to the christian family of late Nathaniel and Christiana Ifeka, the former of Ogboli Eke and the latter of Obosi, Mr. Ifeka had his elementary education in Onitsha and Enugu before going to Okrika Grammar School from where he passed the Cambridge School Certificate in 1946. He attended London University where he obtained a BA (General) and a BA (Hons) in Philosophy. He also holds a City and Guilds Certificate in Radio and Telecommunication, from EMI Institute London. He has been teacher, writer, journalist, businessman and administrator.

Mr. Ifeka founded and edited a daily paper with Dr. Chike Obi — The Voice of the People in Onitsha in 1964 and ran it till the Nigerian crisis erupted in 1966. From 1970—76 he ran and edited single handedly another daily paper THE NIGER HERALD and was member of the Onitsha Divisional School Management Board from 1970—76. In 1975 he became the Vice Chairman of the Onitsha Urban Council, a position he held until 1976 when he was elected Chairman of Onitsha Urban Council.

He served on the board of the Star Printing and Publishing Company Ltd. from 1976—79.

Sam Ifeka's sense of humour is both characteristic and infectious. Read this from his favourite column in his newspaper, Niger Herald titled the Hidden Realities of Names.

"I never cease to ask myself why some people are so pathologically pre-occupied with names, that they go, out of their way and other people's to go by horried and improbable appellations."

"Just yesterday I had the opportunity to add to my list of improbable names the detonating syllables of "OGEDENTHUS."

"Now the first question that bothered me was what type of character could carry such a load of a name. Mind you I had long ago concluded that Shakespeare is definitely wrong in thinking that there is nothing in a name. For one thing he did not reckon with Nigerians."

"Anyway back to Ogedenthus I was sure, oddly enough that my imaginary man must be fat and so would definitely hate bananas. You know of course that 'Ogede' in some parts of this country and among Yorubas is vernacular for banana and it is a known fact that fat people hate bananas. I got to know this during the tail end of my infancy from two distant corpulent female cousins of mine who had the most persistent allergy to bananas."

"I once saw a man whom I thought was the nearest human approximation to a rooster. He in his sheer animal alertness and precision reminded me, for no clear reason, of an alarm clock. And it turned out as accidentally and mysteriously as such things do, that this man's name was "Okokorobiko", what if this man actually crows at 4.00 a.m.

"But the odd thing was that the bearer of this assonant array of consonants would not change it for any other name and would not brook anyone juggling or idling with those syllables.

"His unyielding attachment to his name reminded me that time was in this great country Nigeria when a whole town fought a "Spelling Battle" and a high-powered "Commission of Inquiry" was set up by the Government to decide whether Akokwa should be spelt Akaokwa."

"Why did a beautiful name such as Agbaja make room

for such a sloppy one as Abatete."

"Surely, I can understand Awka Nkaku (Awka, the shrew) becoming Awka-Etiti (i.e. Awka Central)."

"I am trying to understand why Ukpo Akpu (Cassava Ukpo) suddenly up-rooted its staple diet and slimmed down to Ukpo."

"But I would like to know for dear love of knowledge why Orokwu(?) was christianed Oraukwu (Great Can) This is vandalism in its purest form because we do know that there is always something in a name. Those who think that names are like an underwear which must be cast aside when one is hot should look into the Hidden Realities of Names."

Mr. Ifeka like most Onitsha people is a strong, believer in the creation of Aniom State of which Onitsha should be a part. He is also opposed to Onitsha becoming the capital of New Anambra State because as he says "Onitsha is an indigenous town simpliciter, whatever swells the number is a transit and volatile majority. Apart from few settlers from other states, notably Hausas, Nupes, Yorubas and Kakandas most of non-Onitsha population comprises 5-day lodgers"

"The frantic week-end exodus is an abiding evidence. Every Friday, starting from noon all roads leading out of Onitsha are infected with a traffic go-slow that protracts into the midnight of the next day. From about 2 p.m. on Sunday the position reverses to a maddening rush that defies all safety precautions."

"For five days Onitsha is turned into a litter dump. At weekends when the mess should be cleared those who cause it vamooze into the clean safety of their villages. The gold mine is abandoned."

"Is it fair, for one who has no residential interest to determine the political future of a native? Is it not the

case that everyone in this country has his own place of origin? Is it not the reason why every non-Onitsha person who dies in Onitsha or in any other place in Nigeria is conveyed to his own home town for the final funeral rites?

"This is our case that what we have obtained legally and constitutionally is being taken away fraudulently and immorally. This force of intolerance is rearing its horrid head once more, Onitsha and Ogbaru do not want to be included into the "New Anambra State."

'WHEN Sam was appointed a member of Onitsha Divisional School Management Board 1970-76, he persuaded his colleagues of the immediate necessity of removing all unnecessary religious trappings from our schools. They therefore embarked on 'rebaptizing' the schools with secular names. They delved into Onitsha history and resurrected our heroes: Ezechima, Obi Anazonwu, Bishop Onyeabor, Bishop Anyaogu, Archdeacon Victor Nwora Umunna, P.H. Okolo, Modebe, Omu Nwagboka, Samuel Adjai Crowther, Heerey, O'connor, and so on and so forth. This ovation gave the Board the needed psychological ascendancy over the Missions, and facilitated the take-over measures.

Ifeka's performance as Chairman of Onitsha Local Government is believed by many difficult to equal. It was pre-eminent in sectors of Sanitation, Erosion Control, Traffic Control and Decongestion, Security, Employment and Market Development.

Under Sanitation, Mr Ifeka introduced house to house refuse collection and disposal even before the latter day ASESA. The Local Government acquired as many as thirty tippers and refuse collectors. Onitsha was zoned for effective monitoring. Possession of dust-bins became mandatory for every house hold. It was the first of its kind and a huge success. Added to this was the creation of public parks and gardens. With the mountainous refuse collected everyday

soil erosion at the Nkisi river sector of the town was checked. The Council also acquired three towing vehicles which not only cleared obstruction on the road, but also increased revenue tremendously.

The highlight of the security measures undertaken was the successful ferretting out of men of the under-world in Onitsha in the famous organized 'mob action' of 1978.

It is perhaps in the area of employment that the Onitsha indigenes benefitted directly. These bold measures could not have been achieved without effective and sufficient manpower. Over two hundred youths, able-bodied men and women, were employed. For the first time the Onitsha man identified himself with his Local Government, and did not consider any job 'too mean' for him to do. Revenue collection in the Council Markets were re-organized by the recalled (by contract) reputable and retired Market Superintendent, Mr David Osaka. Onitsha Local Government was financially buoyant enough to lend the Anambra State Government N1 million for Water Project. It also began negotiation with the Anambra Housing Corporation for the construction of an ultra-modern Shopping Centre at the Ochanja Market.

Perhaps more rewarding, ennobling and lasting of Mr Sam Ifeka's achievements as, Chairman of Onitsha Local Government was the settling of the Onitsha Market dispute over stall allocation which erupted between the Asika Administration and Onitsha people and spilled over into Lt. Col. John Atom Kpera regime. The crisis bifurcated Onitsha into irreconcilable camps, and threatened in its wake the Obishop Institution. Power seekers had a field day. The Ikporo Onitsha (Onitsha Women) were gathered into an instrument of terror, manipulated into challenging traditional authority. They exacted illegal fines on those who bought market stalls and ostracised them in addition. The ostracised dead were almost left to bury themselves as people were barred from attending the funeral rites. The Agbalanze Society

of traditional priests were intimidated. All these had to stop.

Mr Ifeka takes up the story: "We not only took the bull by the horn, but also by the balls-sorry, but the vulgarity is apt! By we I mean the Onitsha indigenous members of the council, including the traditional members comprising Anatogu Onowu, Ukpabi Ajie and Abadom Akpe. An ultimatum had been given to me by the Governor, Lt. Col. John Atom Kpera that the 'dance' should go no further. The Governor insisted that the Owelle must be involved, Owelle graciously lent his support. Also at the same time we found another willing hand in Akukalia Mich Ibekwe, Ex-Commissioner of Police, East Central State. After our meeting with the Governor my strategy received approval. It was the moral support I needed. I briefed my councillors on the strategy. All family spiritual heads in Onitsha, all the Ndichie, Leaders of the Ikporo Onitsha, the executive of the Agbalanze, and the presidents and secretaries of all Age grades were invited to my house, where with my Councillors I placed a ban against illegal fines, ostracism and any form of intimidation. All those invited were enjoined to carry the message. There was a thorough dressing down of the brains behind the Ikporo Onitsha. Peace had returned to Onitsha."

In 1979, Sam was appointed the Commissioner for Finance, Anambra State. Another area of priceless contribution to the Onitsha cause became open. Sam's indefatigable fight for the inclusion of Onitsha in the proposed Anioma State was given full reins. It was a singular achievement to get the Anambra State Government to accept the Onitsha request, and state so openly in a Government White Paper. He founded and funded the Anioma Youth Movement with Rtd, Justice Kaine as Patron, and carried the fight for inclusion of Onitsha in the proposed Anioma State into the four Local Government across the Niger. A branch was set up at Enugu, from which other outposts in the Federation were co-ordinated.

For all his exposure to foreign culture, Ifeka believes very strongly in Onitsha traditional values. He is a trado-priest of the Onitsha Agbalanze Society, having been initiated into the Ozo on the 6th of January 1978 with the title of Ojinnaka.

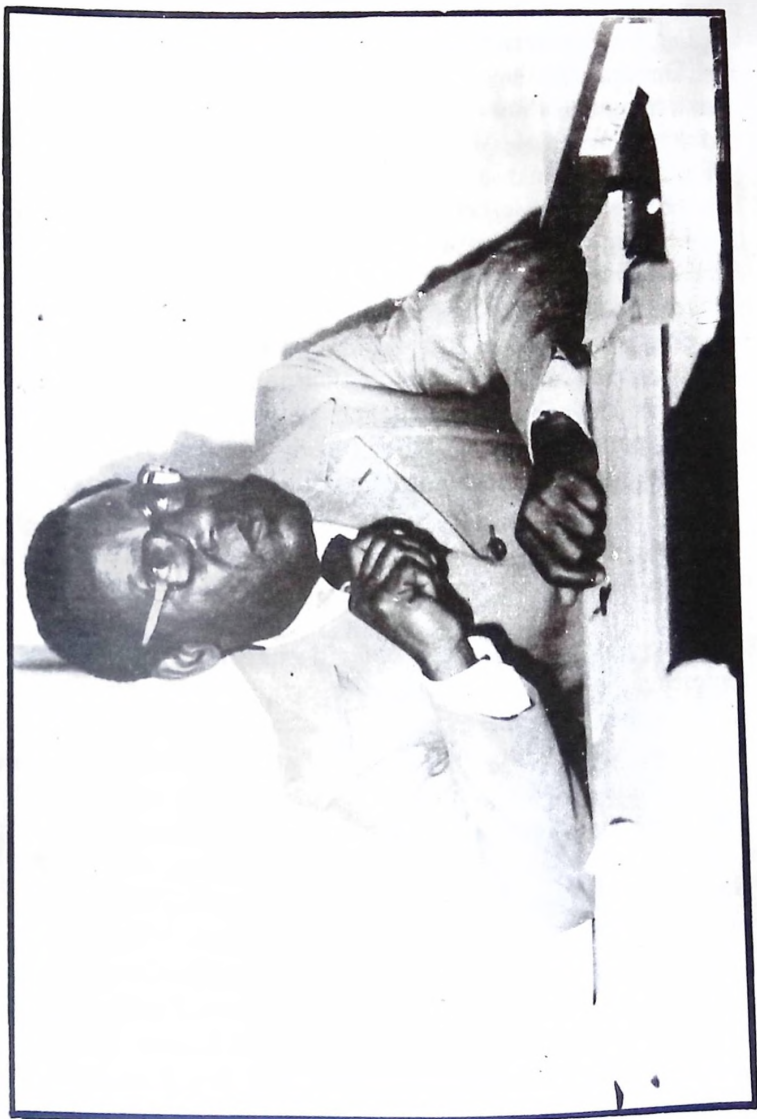
An intellectual of no mean order the former President of Birkbeck College Philosophy Society has the following publications to his credit.

- 1) Vergil Georgics Bk IV. Classical Translation (1962)
- 2) GCE Past Questions & Answers, Tabansi Press, Onitsha (1963)
- 3) A Guide to Essay & Letter Writing, Herald Books Ltd. Onitsha 1965.
- 4) A Guide to Prepositions, Herald Books Ltd. Onitsha 1967
- 5) 'Looking at Ourselves' — A Post-Biafra Social Analysis Herald Books Ltd; Onitsha 1970.
- 6) Onitsha Kingship Institution Herald Books Ltd., 1973
- 7) Onitsha Social Heritage Unpublished (Researched 1948-51)

A widely travelled man Sam has been to Britain (where he lived for 12 years), Canada, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Germany, France, Spain and Holland. An excellent lawn and table tennis player, he represented West Africa in the World University Summer Games in Budapest in 1954. Sam recollects: "There were five of us West African Students: Four Nigerians, Akoni Pratt (Lagos), Watson (now Anyafulu, a chief magistrate based at Onitsha, and a schoolmate at Central School, Onitsha in the late 30's), Okoye Philip (Lagos), and Payne from Sierra Leone, Pratt and Sam distinguished themselves in lawn tennis. Sam has also University of London, Onitsha Sports Club, and Onitsha Recreation Club Lawn Tennis Championship laurels to

show for his skill in a game in which he ruefully knows one day age will make it impossible for him to participate. A believer in Onitsha Kingship Sam regards its conception as most sublime and remarkable: He speaks: "Anyone who has been a witness to Udo Rites during the induction of the Obi, and has taken in the esoteric significance of the 'death' of the aspirant from the physical slaughter of the white cow, the copping of the entire hair by the priestess, and the offering of same to the Udo shrine, will not fail to appreciate what sublimity is all about. It has always been the case that what matters is the SONG, not the SINGER. So it is with Onitsha Kingship. But it goes beyond that. Here the singer is absorbed by the SONG. The singer becomes the SONG. The SONG becomes the SINGER. But the SONG never dies, so the SINGER always lives. You 'kill' the SINGER. You kill' the SONG. The problem with the Edos (Benin) stems from the blood of the Obas they shed. The unity which has perennially eluded the Yorubas is traceable to the mess which they made of the heads of their crowned heads at one time or the other. Onitsha has no culture of dishonouring Kingship. The day Onitsha tampers with its Kingship, that day Onitsha dies."

Ojinnaka Sam Ifeka is married to Anaechlunwa Rose Nkiru and has seven children. There is no doubt that more chapters will unfold in the store of this remarkable son of Ado.



MR HERBERT O. UNEGBU
alias Unu Habib

MR HERBERT O. UNEGBU

SINCE Zik made a huge success as a journalist, many an Onitsha man has distinguished himself in the field of mass communication. Among such Onitsha men mention would be made of Akunne P.C. Agbu former editor of Nigerian Spokesman and West African Pilot the subject of this chapter, Mr Herbet Unegbu, Mr Onwuegbuna of the Spokesman, Mr Stephen Iweanya, Mr Achike Chuks Okafo of Daily Times, Jo-Bel Molokwu of Daily Star, Felix Odiari. In broadcasting and radio journalism history will always ring the praises of late Joe Atuona of erstwhile NBC, Mr Obi Ebo, Late Chukwuma Okonkwo, Ikenna Ndaguba and Ikem Ikobi. In the allied field of public relations, Mr Peter Onono, public relations adviser Nigerian Breweries Ltd. is the first qualified man from Onitsha in his field closely followed by Mr Chike Akosa currently National Co-ordinator International Public Relations Association (I.P.R.A.).

Besides Zik, it can safely be said that Herbert Unegbu represents the best Onitsha has ever produced in journalism either in performance in experience or in exposure. He became a News Editor with Daily Times, Lagos 1955-57, world affairs columnist Sunday Times Lagos, contributor NBC. Weekly commenta or on world affairs; political columnist west African Pilot regional editor NBC East 1960-61, editor West African Pilot Lagos April 1961-March, 1965; Diplomatic and Lobby Correspondent NBC Lagos April 1961-March, 1965; Diplomatic and Lobby Correspondent NBC Lagos April 1965; Controller News Radio Biafra 1969; Director-International Press Institute Lagos 1962-65; Editor NBC Enugu 1970; Columnist of the Renaissance Enugu 1971 - 74 FRCN editor current affairs and head current affairs unit 1975.

Born about 60 years ago, of the Obiozo Family of Ogboli-Eke Village of Onitsha, Herbert Onwuka Unegbu is best remembered as the stormy petrel of Nigeria journalism in the decade before, and after independence. No cause, no issue in human relations or public affairs would escape his penetrating dart. He was fearless and courageous. As Unu Habib he became an institution in the Nigerian media stage.

We are cramped for space and can only give brief glimpses in this sketch, of his contributions to national life. The record of his works as News Editor and columnist Ken Russell and Pepe Le Moko of the Daily Times; Pioneer G.M. Radio Bauchi. Editor and columnist Unu Habib of the West African Pilot; Controller of News of Radio Biafra: and Head of Current Affairs of the NBC are all to be found in the National Archives.

The story is often told how Mr Unegbu aborted what was to be the first ever visit to Nigeria of Joseph Mobutu Sese-Seko, in 1962. He was coming in from Ivory Coast and Togo. Unegbu published an editorial in the West African Pilot on the arrival day, urging the Lagos crowd to troop the airport to tell the Prime Minister that he should not be seen shaking hands in welcome, with a man whose hand was "dripping with the blood of Patrice Lumumba". The crowd responded. The French embassy radioed Togo and Mobutu cancelled his trip to Lagos, and flew instead to Chad. Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was upset. He felt that Unegbu should be prosecuted. Dr Taslim Elias balked. The chap had committed no offence, he told the Prime Minister. Chief M.T. Mbu was sent to Unegbu to secure peace. Thereafter, the West African Pilot became first daily reading for the Prime Minister.

Peace however did not hold for too long. The West African Pilot accused Minister Raymond Amanze Njoku of bribery. Balewa was ruffled. But, he called a press conference to explain that the allegation had come to his notice

and he would investigate. Njoku was cleared on a technicality. The organ again cried out during the Ijora land deal involving K.O. Mbadiwe who was a Minister and sold his land at Ijora to the Government, for the National Pool House. The media said this was a shady deal. In any case it was immoral for the Minister to profit from the sale. K.O. said the land sold at a give-away price. The press did not agree. So too Unegbu, who urged Balewa to fade out his Minister.

There was tumult in the ranks of the NCNC which felt that Unegbu should be defending a party minister rather than joining others to call for his scalp. Mr F.S. McEwen General Manager had earlier appealed to Unegbu to do the best that could be done for K.O., Mr A.K. Blankson the Chairman of Zik's Press Ltd came later to instruct that the paper should support K.O. firmly. He had earlier in the day called a press conference to answer to press charges and the party believed that the Minister had cleared the air.

Mr Blankson visited the printing works at night to discover that Unegbu had "finished" K.O. There were two editorials for that day. Blankson removed the relevant editorial which urged K.O. to find the door or be shown the way. Unegbu returned later the same night to remove his name from the imprint of the paper. His agent kept the editor informed all along.

Mr Blankson had forgotten that editorials were sent overnight in advance, to the NBC. The particular editorial was not withdrawn, and was reviewed by the radio, on the following morning. But, it was not in the paper. And the editor's name was not in the imprint. The press was agog. Copies of the editorial were obtained from the radio and published by other media. A decade later K.O. on a chance meeting told the Editor that he had forgotten and forgiven the past. Though Mr Unegbu edited a paper which generally

supported the NCNC he always insisted on his right to freedom of action. Indeed, he maintained his independence and took it out on the party or its government whenever he felt things were wrong. Such was the case when in 1961 he urged all key party leaders, to withdraw from office, for a while, and submit themselves to a period of regeneration. He called the piece The Kamaraj Plan after the Indian Politician who exiled himself from office to undergo rebirth. Bickerings and quarrels were then rife in the party hierarchy. The editorial caused an explosion but Unegbu survived. He had learned to walk a tight rope using factions in the party as platforms.

The big test of courage came during the tussle over the kingship of Onitsha between Nnanyelugo J.J. Enwezor and J.O. Onyejekwe who eventually became the Obi. The Harding Commission had favoured Onyejekwe but the Premier Dr Michael I. Okpara and some of his ministers wanted Chief Enwezor to be the Igwe. The reason they gave was that he had been staunch supporter of the party since 1946 when he contributed five hundred pounds to the nation-wide tour of the NCNC.

This was then the opportunity to compensate him. O.U. Affiah the Minister responsible for Chieftaincy affairs was given a set of history books and ordered to find evidence from them, to wreck the Harding report. Mr P.N. Okeke told his premier, that he would not oppose their plan, in the cabinet. He warned however that any imposition, anything done in conflict with the tradition of the Onitsha people, would ensure that peace would elude the town. In his days as leader of the non-Onitsha Ibo Association, he explained, he had fought relentlessly against the Onitsha people. That however was another matter. The Obishop issue had to do with custom and tradition and Harding had, in his report, sided with tradition.

The premier was adamant. His only purpose was to compensate financier or supporter of the party. That was all he could see. He was quite honest about it.

Mr Okeke sneaked into Lagos and was at the State House to see Zik. Dr Okechukwu Ikejiani met him and linked up with Mr Unegbu. His first words to Mr Unegbu were: "This youngman in Enugu wants to set Onitsha ablaze... you must stop him from causing any confusion." The West African Pilot came out with an editorial urging the Eastern Region Government to publish the Harding report together with its own conclusions and decisions on same. The paper warned that Government would need a division of troops to police Onitsha if it rejected Harding's recommendations and imposed an Obi on the Onitsha people.

The Eastern Regional Government was furious. E.P. Okoya the Minister of Information found the basis to start what was then termed "radio editorial" on the Government radio. For one week, Mr Unegbu was castigated mercilessly. It was said government had not taken a decision on the matter; that Unegbu was using the Pilot to cause disaffection for the Government. An Ado man, Izuchukwu Areh, was used to organise a demonstration to the Eastern House of Assembly which was in session, against Unegbu. The placards read, "Unegbu Must Go ."

The West African Pilot hit out again, against the placard carrying hungry urchins, and those who hired them. It said if anyone wanted to know where the paper stood, the word was: "We are independent." At that, the premier, Dr Okpara addressed an open letter to Unegbu, which was published in the Nigerian Outlook before Unegbu received the letter formally. The letter warned Unegbu to "think again" about his often vaunted independence. What he meant soon became clear when Mr Blankson cornered

Unegbu and demanded that he apologise immediately, and on the front page of his paper, to the premier; and cease to write anything more other than mea culpa.

He was told to consult State House and Dr Ikejiani: He did and learnt his lesson on the true meaning of freedom of the press. Blankson understood. He recalled to Unegbu that the West African Pilot was owing the ACB heavily. The Bank belonged to the Government. If M.I. decides to apply the squeeze, "we are done for ... that is my headache." Blankson wrote Dr Okpara and apologised to him personally, assuring that he would then monitor Mr Unegbu. He never did, except to plead with the editor not again to twist the premier's era. Onyejekwe ultimately became the Obi of Onitsha.

Credit for nipping in the bud a proposal to intrude a preventive Detention Law in Nigeria in 1963 must go largely to the West African regional premiers and political party leaders. Two southern premiers pushed strenuously for adoption of the proposal by the conference. The Sarduana of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello, made it clear that he did not need such a law in his region. Nonetheless he would not stand in the way of colleagues who favoured it. The leader of the Dynamic Party, Dr Chike Obi condemned the move but could not bend Okpara and Akintola.

On his return to Lagos Dr Obi quickly got in touch with the Editor of the West African Pilot and exposed the plan. A powerful editorial resulted. It attacked the key advocates of the law by name and warned the nation to be prepared to make the supreme sacrifice if necessary, to prevent this "primitive proposal meant to chain our liberties" for the aggrandisement of native Hitlers.

Other media joined the fray. Political party causes were

stirred. The West African Pilot kept up the battle until the premiers were compelled to make public denials that they favoured the law. The Sarduana for once broke silence and told how it began to the embarrassment of his colleagues. The furor raised by the West African Pilot killed the proposal. Unegbu was lionised everywhere he went. Professor Henri Bretton of the UNN, who had written a book on the Nigerian press, concluding that the press did not have the power to influence changes in the system met Unegbu in May and congratulated him. He said it was a great achievement to abort the proposed law, and promised to correct his book accordingly.

That year the powerful West African Lines Conference raised their freight tariff steeply for the second time in two years. This created a storm. The press, people, and parliament which was in session were furious. Everyone said the measure would so distort and raise the cost of our economic development programme as to lead to gradual economic strangulation of the country. Herbert Unegbu and his paper were in the thick of the fight. But, he did more than just write columns.

The Editor assembled a panel of experts to work out the cost of the country of the increase in freight rates and write a report to him. This, he in turn submitted to the Minister responsible for economic development, Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri. In three days the report was ready. Unegbu went to the Ministry of Economic Development, exchanged courtesies with Allison Ayida, the Permanent Secretary, and walked in to the Minister to deliver the report. He did not mention a word about it to Ayida who was working on statement the Minister was to make to Parliament on the issue. Parliament had demanded that the Minister explain the situation because of the outcry in the press.

Two days later, Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri read a statement in parliament. It was based on Unegbu's report. The day after, the editor gave the report to the Minister. Ayida had phoned to complain about the slight in not letting him into the picture. Unegbu was full of apologies. Waziri himself phoned the editor saying: "I thought you were my adversary, I now know that you are a true nationalist ... You are a true Nigerian."

Just one week after the Minister read his statement in parliament, which compelled a review of the freight charges. Unegbu received a terse letter signed by Ayida. It said, "The Minister of Economic Development Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri is pleased to appoint you a member of the Economic Advisory Council ..."

Herbet Unegbu retired as Assistant Director of Programme Services of the FRCN in 1985. In 1986-87 he functioned as Speech Writer at Government House in Enugu. He is now on his own and remains active in journalism as Chief Executive of Unu Habib Link Services.

Mr Unegbu is married to Bridget (Nee Egbuche) of Cadbury Nig. Ltd. and blessed with children, the eldest is now Mrs Oby Okocha.



IFEDIORAMMA ISAAC EKWEREKWU

IFEDIORAMMA ISAAC I. EKWEREKWU

THOSE who are familiar with efforts of Onitsha people in community development in modern times, know that as a people they have been veritable failures. That is if we want to be true to ourselves and face facts. From the days of the Onitsha Improvement Union in the twenties to date, except for cosmetic attempts at modifying our customs, there is nothing by way of a concrete structure anywhere in Nigeria said to have been built by Onitsha indigenes as a people. At Enugu where the State Government gave the Onitsha Improvement Union a parcel of land to build a Hall, the spot is identified more for the unkempt bush there than any meaningful effort at development. At Onitsha the story is almost the same except for the crying need to build a palace for the Obi of Onitsha on a neutral ground which made some patriots, not O.I.U. to choose and start developing the New Ime Obi (Palace) at Awka Road Onitsha on former O.I.U. property.

It is therefore with this background that one has to appreciate the contribution of Barrister Isaac I. Ekwerekwu in spearheading an indigenous organisation nearly ten years ago in 1978 which has done concrete and lasting things in Onitsha for which every Onitsha man of whatever political or religious persuasion is proud. I am referring to the establishment of Ado Club of Nigeria in 1978 by Ifediora Isaac Ekwerekwu and others.

Ado Club unlike O.I.U. before it, is an indigenous Onitsha Club with aims and objectives which are both social and charitable. It is a non-political and non-denominational body which caters for the welfare of the members particularly Onitsha indigenes and the Onitsha public.

Under the leadership of Barrister I.I. Ekwerekwu who has been the president of the club since its inception, Ado Club of Nigeria acquired ($\frac{1}{2}$) half an acre of land between 1978 and 1981 at a cost of ₦70,000.00 (seventy thousand naira) and erected an impressive hall costing over N150,000.00 (one hundred and fifty thousand naira) and for bereaved members who are financially up to date, the Club had disbursed over N112,000.00 (one hundred and twelve thousand naira) as death benefits. Donations by the Club including the New Ime Obi Project and other worthwhile ventures, had reached over ₦40,000.00 (fourty thousand naira).

While the success of Ado Club is the joint and concerted effort of every members, it surely redounds to the dynamic and purposeful leadership of Ifediora Isaac Ekwerekwu the President and moving spirit of the club.

Born on 5th February 1930, to late Akunwafor Joseph Anara Ekwerekwu erstwhile Head of the land owning family of Okposieke in Ogboli-Eke Onitsha, Isaac Ifeanyi Ekwerekwu trained in Holy Trinity School and Christ the King College Onitsha before obtaining a Law degree from Queen's University Belfast Northern Ireland in 1962, and was called to the Bar by King's Inn Dublin Eire on 16th November, 1959.

He was elected councillor Onitsha Local Government 1976—1979. During the present Military regime he was appointed councillor in 1986. He also served as a member of the Board of Internal Revenue.

His social activities are as well known as they are all-embracing. He is one of the foundation members of the well known People's Club of Nigeria, a national, philanthropic non-political organisation. He is both the National Legal Adviser and Trustee of this Club.

As a mark of his interest in the programme of People's Club, he was personally responsible for securing a large

parcel of land along Onitsha — Owerri Road Onitsha where the People's Club has built its ₦2.5 million National Headquarters.

Mr. Ekwerekwu's personal sacrifice and courage no less than his activities made it possible for Onitsha land owning families to retain and physically occupy their lands across Nkisi stream at 3—3 Onitsha. Such families that benefitted from this pioneering patriotic effort of Ifediora Ekwerekwu are his family of Okposieke. Umuenema (Okagbue) Family of Ogbeodogwu Village, Tasia family of Ogbeodogwu village. Umuokoligbo family of Umudei village, Umuosodi family of Umudie, the Mba family of Umudei village, Umuodogwu (Anikamadu) family of Ogbeodogwu village, Umuorezagbo family of Umudei village Onitsha, etc.

Mr. Ekwerekwu is a member of Ifeatu Age Grade Society of Onitsha and Agbalanze Society.

He is married to Rose (nee Egbuche) of Orowa family of Ogboza village of Umuezeoroli. He has many children.



LATE MAJOR EMMA IFEAJUNA

EMMANUEL IFEAJUNA

“It has been my fate to be personally entangled in some stormy if significant incidents

— Emma Ifeajuna.”

Born to a civil servant and a housewife in 1935 in Onitsha, Emmanuel Ifeajuna's short life represents a frightful embrace with destiny.

It was when he got into DMGS in 1956 that he began to have insights into the anti-establishment role, history seemed to have reserved for him. He promptly got actively involved in a school riot. It was after D M G S days while waiting to enter University College, Ibadan that he got a job as a clerk and made a Nigerian and Commonwealth history with his record breaking jump of 5 feet 8 inches in Vancouver in Canada giving Nigeria its first gold medal in any sporting event outside the country.

His anti-establishment bent continued. As science student he led no less than three riots against the institutions authorities. On graduation in 1958, destiny led him on to a school teacher's job which he quit a few months later to join the Army. The climax of his sad life began. In league with other majors they sought to create a socialist Nigeria. That was the coup attempt of January 15th, 1966. It failed and he fled to Ghana disguised as a woman in search of a new destiny. But what the gods had put together, Ifeajuna could not put asunder. Nkrumah repatriated him in February, into the waiting hands of prison officials at Uyo Prisons. From prison he heard of the Biafran secession. Released by

Emeka Ojukwu, he enlisted into the Biafran Army. Even then, Ifeajuna to be anti-establishment, in August, 1966, he called Col. Alex Madiebo and told him that Biafran secession was unnecessary. Madiebo unknown to Ifeajuna put the "rebellion talk" on tape and replayed it for Ojukwu. Immediately in a quick dispensation court, Ifeajuna was convicted and sentenced to death on September 20th, 1967. A widow Rose and two children survive him.

It is remarkable that Emmanuel Ifeajuna's name was conspicuously absent in the first 1987 list of Award Winners Honours List despite the fact that he was the first Nigerian to win a Gold Medal in any International sporting event.

BY SEYES AWOFE



CHIEF UKPABI ASIKA
The Ajie Ukadiugu of Onitsha

CHIEF UKPABI ASIKA:

ANYONE familiar with the contemporary history of Nigeria should be aware of the vital role of Ajie Ukpabi Asika first as Administrator of Enugu and the Liberated areas of the ECS and after 10th January, 1970 as the administrator of East Central State.

The speeches, writings and interviews of Ajie Ukpabi Asika published in 1968 under the title 'No victors, no vanquished' adequately reflect the character of the man who despite the obvious hazard voluntarily accepted to serve from October 28th 1967 as Administrator of Enugu and the Liberated areas of ECS. That singular act of his showed him to be not only a man of conviction but even more importantly a man of indomitable courage prepared when it mattered most, to back up his conviction with courageous action.

His subsequent appointment in 1970 as Administrator of the ECS made it possible for many more in and outside Nigeria to become acquainted with him and to observe his style of administration closely. Ajie Ukpabi Asika's five and a half years in office as Administrator confirmed as some already knew, that he is an intellectual who endeavours at every turn to be objective in his consideration and analysis of events and situations as well as in the proposal of possible solutions.

As an administrator, Ajie Asika brought to the programme and activities of Government a style which reflected his personal qualities of courage, humanism, altruism and dedication to hard work. An avid reader and a thinker particularly interested in systems thinking and analysis, he was quick to propose solutions to problems and bring into effect institutional and such other changes or reforms deemed essential. He is a good listener, open to criticisms and suggestions as to

modalities; but he is also one who never permits himself to be swerved from pursuing a goal which he was already persuaded to be desirable and achievable. He never would make a claim to a monopoly of wisdom; and was ever willing to encourage the articulation of any new proposal, or programme etc. for the better governance of the state, or the implementation of ongoing projects. He recognized the expert and would invariably recruit and provide him the essential tools and inducement for effective performance.

The major post-civil war tasks as enunciated by the Federal and State Governments were those of reconciliation rehabilitation and reconstruction. In the prosecution of these programmes those personal qualities of Ajie Asika already noted were very much at work. As early as 1968, he had stressed the point that in the family war then raging, there could be 'no victor, no vanquished'. This approach was exemplified in his many decisions affecting the resettlement and reabsorption of 'returnee' public officers and in the encouragement of staff who served so faithfully during the thirty months of the civil strife. Ajie Asika in his humaneness had also declared that he was more concerned with the preservation of the lives and liberties of the Ibos and that what was "essential was to be pro-human beings". Is it any wonder then that rehabilitation and reconstruction were pursued in the East Central State vigorously and effectively within the resources available to Government?

At the end of the civil strife many were of course angry, bitter and resentful; while recognizing this fact, the Ajie sought to lead them away from this attitude towards peace and good neighbourliness. Ajie Asika therefore was the first to speak courageously against the policy of abandoned property and to urge all leaders to bring this policy to an end. In his private discussion

with his colleagues and at other meetings including ESIALA he continued to argue and to insist that he did "believe that all of us who lead and govern the people of our states have an unavoidable duty as leaders of not only ensuring that freedom of residence is said to exist. It would for example be a negation of that freedom and not only a travesty of languages but a trivialization of the sacred principles on which we waged our struggle for us to continue to describe and administer as abandoned property the homes of our co-citizens who come from neighbouring state and who are able, anxious and desperate to resume ownership of their homes.

"I speak with immense burden of pain on a difficult issue but with a sense of responsibility as a Nigerian as a concerned citizen who once staked his all on the altar of our national struggle for unity. I truly believe that all of us called into public service as the leaders of our people, must seek to rise above the sway of present tempers and emotions. No matter the circumstances, we can only lead our people, when we show an awareness of both system and members, without loss of clarity in either. It may be true and it is true that our people are bitter, angry and resentful. It is nonetheless our obligation as leaders to lead them away from anger, resentment and bitterness to accommodation, good neighbourliness and amnesty."

In retrospect, one also recalls several of his innovative reforms in the area of education, health, agriculture, public administration and market development. Many of these reforms have today become commonplace in the administration of State governments. The take-over and management of schools and the establishment of a unified teaching service were first introduced in the East Central State and so was the Health Management Board — an innovative approach now accepted by all for

the effective management of Government health services. In the area of local government the DAD Edict promulgated by Ajie Asika's administration established a new approach to the problem of governance of the rural areas while the OTU OLU OBODO programme should be seen as a forerunner and an aspect of MAMSER which we today trumpet.

Ajie Asika showed tremendous vision in several ways for example, the fact that as early as 1970 he recognized the necessity for and did bring together under one organization which he appropriately designated PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (PRODA) scientists and engineers who had in 'Biafra' produced from local sources bombs and military hardware and constructed a petroleum refinery. His action was vehemently opposed in several quarters; but the Ajie was concerned with as he himself would most likely state, the system which worked such technological marvel rather than with the members. Today PRODA has become one of the main centres accepted by Federal and State Governments for the many research and other activities essential for our technological advancement.

After the civil war, when Onitsha roads were impassable, it was Asika who for the first time in history started road reconstruction from the sub-urban area of Enu Onicha or Inland Town. The result is that the inland town which once wore a rural outlook as if it were a different Onitsha is well served by modern and tarred roads.

Through the establishment of Market Authority Asika's Government made it possible for Onitsha and other urban cities like Enugu and Aba to benefit from the proceeds of their markets which his government regarded as industries whose benefits should accrue to the indigenous population. Many important

personalities from Onitsha who opposed this laudable and visionary plan, were the first to demand Onitsha's share of the profits from the Onitsha Market long after Asika had left office and a succeeding government quickly scrapped the Market Authority. It is significant however that for some consideration, the government of NPP in Anambra State allowed Onitsha people through the Onitsha Development Trust Fund another brain child of Ukpabi Asika, to take the last entitlement of the percentage from the market profits amounting to over four hundred thousand naira. Happily this was ploughed into the Ime Obi Palace Project.

Ukpabi Anthony Asika was born on June 28, 1936 at Jos of Onitsha parents late Edward Obiozo Asika and Rebecca N. Asika. He attended various primary schools at Jos, Onitsha, Enugu and Calabar. He was in St. Patrick's College Calabar in 1949, and Edo College Benin City in 1951; entered University College, Ibadan in 1956 and graduated BSc Hons Economics in 1961. He went to the University of California Los Angeles 1961 (where he graduated M.A. in Political Science in 1963. He did research studies in politics of New States (Africa and the Carribean) and in the Theory of Political Sociology.

On his return from the USA he joined the University of Ibadan as a lecturer in Political Sociology in January, 1966, appointed assistant warden of Tedder Hall University of Ibadan November, 1966. He visited East and Central Africa for research studies on a University Grant (July 4th — September 29, 1967). On October, 29th 1967, he was appointed Administrator of Enugu and other Liberated Areas of East Central State of Nigeria.

In October 1969, he was appointed Administrator of East Central State with full gubernatorial powers. In April, 1970 he was appointed Sole Civilian member of

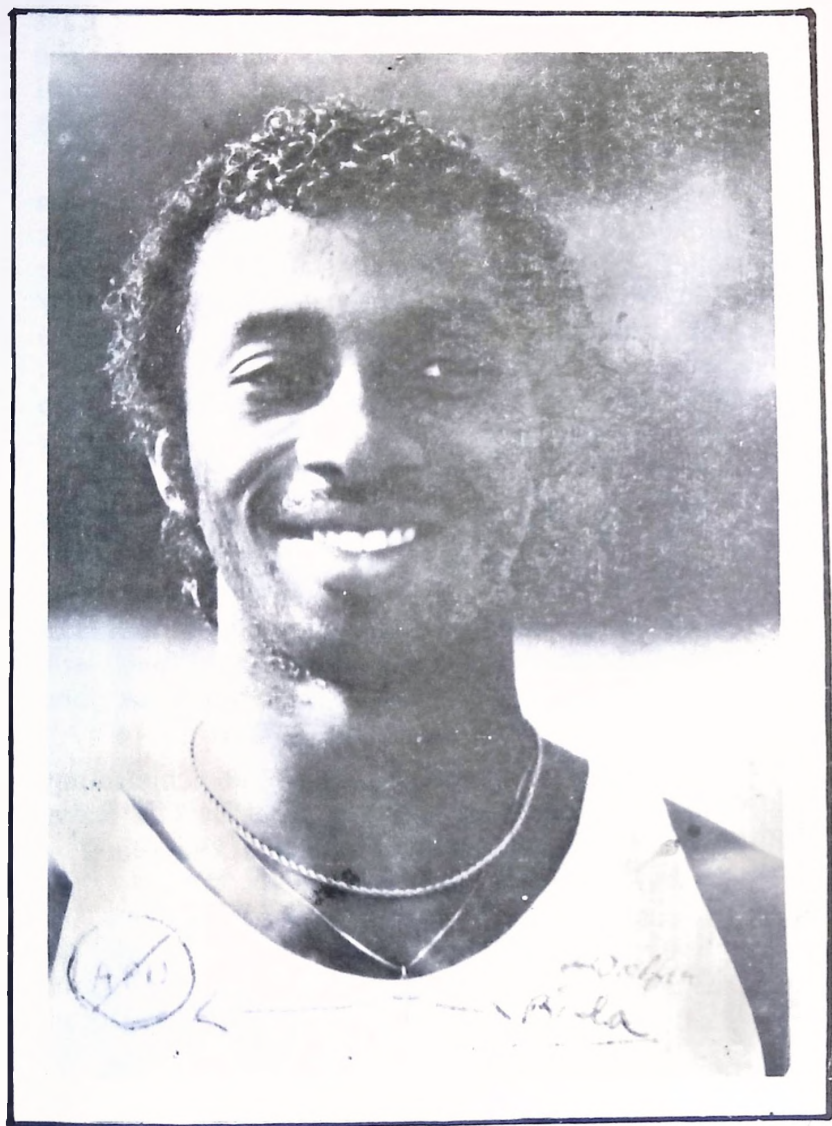
the Supreme Military Council of Nigeria. On the appointment of an Executive Council for the East Central State in May, 1970, he was responsible for the portfolio of Information and Home Affairs until November, 1971. He was Member of Eastern States Interim Assets and Liabilities Agency June, 1970.

Chief Asika's awards and honours include Prizeman in Economics of the University of Ibadan in 1960; Rockefeller Foundation Scholar in Political Science 1961—65. Member Political Science Honour Fraternity of USA 1963 Past President of African Students Association of Southern California U.S.A. 1963—65; awarded LLD (Honoris Causa) Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, December 1970; also D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) University of Nigeria Nsukka December, 1971.

He was decorated with the Order National of the Republic of Senegal and Order of the Two Niles First Class of the Republic of Sudan.

He is married to Rebecca (nee Ejiogu) an alumnus of Ibadan University. The Asikas have one son Obodoechina and two daughters Nkeiruka and Obianuju.

Mr. Asika was honoured with the senior chieftaincy title of Ajie Ukadigwu of Cabinet rank by His Royal Highness Igwe Ofala Okagbue I the Obi of Onitsha.



INNOCENT EGBUNIKE

INNOCENT EGBUNIKE:

AT the recently concluded All Africa Games in Nairobi, Kenya, which ended in August, 1987, Mr. Daniel Arap Moi, President of Kenya referred to Innocent as the EGBUNIKE OF AFRICA in these words:— "But Egbunike, you can carry on winning: though Kenyans may feel that you robbed us of that 4 x 400 metres men's relay gold medal; after all, you are Egbunike of Africa".

Egbunike did it in a grand style at 44.23 seconds — a rare African record. The Sports Director of Azusa Pacific University, Gary Pine said this of Innocent — "Innocent Egbunike is a world class sprinter. That means that his foot speed is a rare commodity; not just in his native country Nigeria but throughout the world. This foot speed has taken Innocent from Enugu to Los Angeles, California and the world around including two Summer Olympics. He has toured most Western Europe and travelled in Scandinavia and across into Russia. To put it succinctly, he's seen it all.

"Therefore, it might be hard for an athlete who has seen it all, to single out his greatest thrill. Yet without a doubt, one that ranks among the tops is the XXIII Summer Olympics, performed in the backyard of his "home away from home".

"A student at Azusa Pacific University, Egbunike has become a 400 metres specialist after competing in the 1980 Summer Olympics for Nigeria in the 4 x 100 relay. He has turned his sights onto the more difficult 400 metres, the open event and the relay. In the truest sense of the word, he is a rookie of the event. His first 400 metre run was in April, just four months before the Olympics. Yet, that didn't keep him from establishing a 1984 world best of 44.81 in the 400 metres set in just his second meet.

“He is feared by his competitors in the 400 metre because he has the best sprint of anyone in the world!!”

Who is this maestro that is taking every international sports meet as by storm? Born 30th November 1962 in Bauchi, Nigeria to Ogbuefi Ononenyi F.O.N. Egbunike a retired Senior Police Officer and Amalunweze C.I. Egbunike, a retired School Mistress Innocent is the youngest member of the family.

He had his elementary education at St. Michael's Catholic School, Enugu 1970 — 1976 where he started exhibiting his talents in sports. A member of the junior football team, he represented his school in the junior athletic competitions in the 100 and 200 metres, winning many laurels.

He attended National Grammar School, Nike, Enugu 1977 — 81. His very keen interest in sports earned him the love and admiration of his school Principal Mr. C.O.C. Chiedozie and his colleagues, within and without Anambra State of Nigeria. He was his school's 1st eleven goalkeeper and also represented both his school and the State in athletics — running both the 100 and 200 metres in all Nigeria schools competitions and the National sports festival.

He held the record for the National Sports in both the 100 and 200 metres in 1979 — 1985 while still a student of the National Grammar School, Nike. Because of his outstanding performance in the sprints, he was selected to represent Nigeria in the 1980 Moscow Olympics. He later gained admission into Azusa Pacific University California U.S.A. in the summer of 1980. At this institution, he met a veteran coach, Terry Franson who has contributed much to Innocent's present stage of development.

Innocent has since his admission into Azusa Pacific, represented the institution in various athletic meets in

the U.S.A. and Europe. He represented Nigeria at the U.S.A. Olympic track of 1984, qualifying for finals in the 400 metres. He anchored the 4 x 400 metres relay which earned Nigeria its first ever Olympic medal in track and field event.

An ambitious and enthusiastic young man, Innocent has the rare honour of being invited each year to international track meets in America and Europe. In 1987, he has honoured a number of invitations in track meets in London Col ogne, Zurich, world Championship in Rome and Grand Prix Finals holding in Brussels.

Innocent is a post-graduate student of physical education.



THE AUTHOR

CHIKE Akosa was born in 1926 to the late Akunne Eergard Chukwuma Akosa and Mrs. Veronica Nkechi Akosa. He attended Christ the King College CKC, Onitsha between 1942 — 1946.

He taught English and Latin briefly at Ibadan Boys High School in 1947 before joining the civil service as Produce Inspector with the Department of Marketing and Export between 1948 — 1959.

He later studied Journalism and Public Relations and worked as a broadcaster with the defunct Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation.

He later joined the services of the former Eastern Nigerian Housing Corporation and later the Anambra State Housing Development Corporation between 1965 and 1984 from where he retired as the first Chief Public Relations Officer of the Corporation.

Mr. Akosa was awarded honorary life membership of the Association of Housing Corporations of Nigeria, for his contributions to the cause of Housing in Nigeria.

After the Civil war, he served CKC Old Boys' Association variously as Secretary, Enugu Branch, National Publicity Secretary and National Secretary between 1970 and 1980.

Perhaps, it is as a Public Relations Practitioner that Mr. Akosa is best known. He manages a firm of Public Relations Consultants and holds the highest Status of Fellow of Nigeria Institute of Public Relations for people who have made significant contribution to the profession. Mr. Akosa has over 22 years experience in the profession.

He still serves on the National Executive Council of the NIPR. He is also the current National Co-ordinator and Council member representing Nigeria in the world body of International Public Relations Association, based in Geneva, IPRA, on which platform he represented Nigeria in two World Public Relations Congresses in India, 1982 and Netherlands, in 1985.

Mr. Akosa is widely travelled.

A keen Rotarian, Mr. Akosa was the Charter Secretary and past President of the Rotary Club of Onitsha East and the Current District 914 Governor's Representative for Rotary Clubs of Ihiala, Nnewi and Onitsha East. He attended his first Rotary International Convention in Kansas city, Missouri. USA in 1985.

He is the current President of the O'Connor Age Grade of Onitsha, the Chairman of the Publicity sub-committee of the Onitsha Palace Project.

In 1986, the Anambra State Government appointed him the President of the Onitsha Customary Court in which capacity he still serves.

Besides Heroes and Heroines of Onitsha, Chike Akosa's publications include FLOREAT CKC, ONITSHA, 1983. He co-authored "A NEW IME-Obi IS BORN" 1985.

Hobbies, reading and writing.